STORY OF A WIDOW REMARRIAGE

00017345

73.1
lad
345

NOT TO BE ISSUED
OUT OF THE LIBRARY.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 05 October, 2018

23377
1951

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY.

THE ASIATIC SOCIETY LIBRARY

STORY

OF A

WIDOW REMARRIAGE.

Being the Experiencies

OF

MADHOWDAS RUGNATHDAS,

Merchant of Bombay.

BOMBAY:
1890.

THE ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
LIBRARY

173.1
Mad
17345

7 JUL 1964

S. K. KHAMBATA & Co.,
BOMBAY, PRINTING WORKS, APOLLO STREET, FORT.

00017345

ASIATIC SOCI . . . MBAY
Presented by:- in memory of
Shri. Balcrushna Vinayak Khersod
by his family.
Date June 1964

CONTENTS.

PAGE.

Introduction... 1

CHAPTER I :—

Life purpose—Early Losses. 5

CHAPTER II :—

A Picture of Misery. 11

CHAPTER III :—

An Alarming Advertisement... 14

CHAPTER IV :—

The Widow and the Widower. 20

CHAPTER V :—

A Struggle and a Resolve. 25

CHAPTER VI :—

Marriage. 30

CHAPTER VII :—

Lamentations—Consternation—Rejoicings... 40

CHAPTAR VIII :—

Troubles and Trials. 46

CHAPTER IX :—

Ex-communication. 52

CHAPTER X:—

Piecrust Promises, ... 55

CHAPTER XI:—

Irreparable Loss—Caste Vengeance and Caste Moralizings... 60

CHAPTER XII:—

A Widow's Adventures. 65

CHAPTER XIII:—

Social Ill-usage—A Few Facts. 68

CHAPTER XIV:—

Stray Thoughts. 91

APPENDIX 115

"It is not to die, or even to die of hunger, that makes a man wretched; many men have died; all must die,—the last exit of us all is in a Fire-Chariot of Pain. But it is to live miserable, we know not why; to be heart-worn, weary, yet isolated, unrelated, girt in with a cold universal Laissez-faire; it is to die slowly all our life long, imprisoned in a deaf, dead Infinite Injustice, as in the accursed iron belly of a Phalaris' Bull! This is, and remains for ever, intolerable to all men whom God has made."—*Carlyle.*

INTRODUCTION.

I am a humble citizen, whose life would have been quite uneventful, if I had not married a widow. Marrying a widow is an inexpiable crime among high caste Hindoos, an unpardonable offence against the domestic proprieties, and social harmony, and therefore, I have been excommunicated from my caste, and have, besides, been subjected, during the eighteen years of my remarried life, to ceaseless torment and persecution.

I should never have thought of putting my experiences into print, had I not been inspired with the hope that the publication may advance, by ever so little, the cause which every Indian, who can think and feel a little, ought to have at heart.

These pages will serve as an illustration to those who maintain that the trials and troubles of the parties to a widow-remarriage do not end with their excommunication. The social ban pronounced upon them and their generation yet unborn is a great, and, in some cases, a well nigh insupportable evil; but it is by no means the greatest evil they have to suffer. Their trials and troubles do not end with excomunication: they only begin with it. They are the life-long victims of base persecution and dark intrigues, and but for the fear of British justice, a thousand and one means would be employed to get rid of them altogether. If their oppressors are powerless to kill, they are virtually at liberty to concoct the basest plots

to ruin the offending couple and to make their life a misery and a weariness unto them. They succeed, at all events, in doing one thing, and that is to scare away others who are willing at heart to do likewise.

A wise and merciful Government declares that windows are at perfect liberty to remarry. A wise and merciful Government wishes that enforced widowhood, with its manifold evils, should not exist. But mere wishes, even though they be the wishes of an all powerful Government, are powerless and ineffectual, unless they were strengthened and supported by some sort of authoritative sanction. Let the interferance be no more than what may be thought absolutely necessary. But interference is necessary ; for wishes alone, unenforced by authority, can do nothing. Caste has hitherto safely, almost contemptuously, put aside those wishes in its perverse determination to perpetuate an enormity.

If we were to wait for "reform from within," and trust entirely to that, then we must wait till,—Heaven knows how long. We have waited for centuries, and we may have to wait for ages more. Government co-operation — if you don't like the word "interference"— co-operation, active willing and beneficent, is necessary to give heart to a number of men and women who would most willingly oppose the abuse, but who, in the present state of things, dread the dire consequences of their offending.

The intervention of Government, which must be as remote and indirect as possible, will result in no danger whatever to the State. It will create much heart-burning, no doubt ; but far less heart-burning than what had followed the decree for the abolition of *Suttee*. It will, on the other hand, bring

joy to thousands of earnest men who wish the monstrosity to go. It will bring joy to hundreds of thousands of my sisters and daughters throughout the land, who have been the victims of that monstrosity. Is it right, is it human, that the Government should abstain from exercising its power for good in a noble cause, because its action would produce an impotent growl and bark from the supporters of a supremely foolish, absurd, and unnatural custom, which it would be a libel upon the Hindoo religion to say has been either originated or sanctified by it?

A good Government is a powerful means of education to the governed. Here is an opportunity for the Government to teach the people, by the wholesome influence of wise legislation, what is right and just and reasonable. The Government can offend no principles of liberty, if it steps in and declares "This evil has remained too long with you. If you do not know your own good, we shall teach you to know it. We shall no longer stand by and allow the evil to be perpetuated."

And what is Liberty, as defined by a great English writer? "The true liberty of a man, you would say, consisted in his finding out, or being forced to find out, the right path and to walk thereon. To learn, or to be taught, what work he actually was able for; and then by permission, persuation, and even compulsion, to set about doing of the same! That is true blessedness, honour, liberty and maximum of well-being; if liberty be not that, I for one have small care about liberty."

My object in recording my personal experiences will have been fulfilled, if they will demonstrate the justice and the

necessity of Government action, and the gross injustice and wrong-doing of Government neutrality, which would mean a deliberate throwing away of its power and ability to do good to a people whom God has placed under its care.

This is the one sole aim of this publication. May it have some influence in determining the powers to move wisely and well for the welfare of the people, and thus add substantially to the blessings we enjoy under British rule!

CHAPTER I.

—:o:—

Life-purpose.—Early Losses.

I propose to put on record, in simple form, my experiences as a Hindoo who married a widow, eighteen years ago. In the eyes of Hindoo orthodoxy the crime of marrying a widow is inexpiable, and I was accordingly subjected by my caste, or rather by some of the *Shettiahs* of my caste, to ill-usage and persecutions. They tried various means to insult me, to harm me, even to ruin me. To uphold the sanctity of custom, they did many unholy things. They scrupled not to become irreligious, in the proper sense of the term, in order to act up to their own idea of what was religious and proper. And to gain their end, they did not care to see what means they employed. Such, alas, is bigotry!

I do not personally blame these men for what they have done to me and mine. They were not, in the first instance, moved by any malice towards me, though, as they went on with their persecutions against me, I can not tell at what particular point pure bigotry ended and malice began, as the motive spring of their action. Yet I blame them not. An object of persecution becomes an object of hatred; and in ordinary minds hatred is soon transformed into malice.

Believe me, it is not vanity or self-glorification that has induced me to write a plain history of one chapter of my otherwise uneventful and most ordinary life. It is a painful chapter, far more on account of my countrymen, than on mine own. A record of what I have been made to suffer for having acted in defiance of a custom which has never had the sanction of religion, and which has not a particle in it of sense or reason to support it, can not give any pleasure to the writer. For it is a record showing how superstition may dgradee and pervert the moral nature of human beings. And, after all, to marry a widow is nothing to be proud of, nothing to glory in. It is not a particularly meritorious act in itself. I only did what I liked to do; and what I liked to do, is just the thing which I wish were more generally done. But what should be quite an ordinary event has been rendered most extraordinary by an unhappy custom. Hence these pages. And if this narrative of mine were to advance, even in a slight degree, the cause of widow remarriage, if it were to lead to an honest and strenuous effort on the part of some few of my country-men to work for it and to sacrifice forit, I shall gratefully consider that the one object of my life and the only purpose of this work, have been fulfilled.

I was first married at the age of eighteen, and after three years of wedded life, my wife died. I married again, when I was twenty-three, a girl who was a sister-in-law of Mr Vurjewandas Madhowdas, one of the *Sheths* of the Kapole Banya caste. She died only eight years after the marriage. I had two daughters by her. I lost them all. I married a third time at the age of thirty-three. I had three issues of this marriage,— two sons who died in their infancy, and one daughter, who is now alive. After nine years, I became, once more, a widower.

I was now forty-one years old, and had lost three good wives, one after another. The affliction was great. My spirit was cast down and crushed within me. I lost all taste of the world; in the depth of my misery and despair my mind conceived a loathing for the pomp and vanities of the world, and for its joys, all too fleeting and uncertain. While I was in this frame of mind, I had fully resolved upon renouncing the world, and devoting in solitude and retirement the rest of my life to the service of my God. But time is the great healer; the feeling gradually wore off, and after a period of acute suffering, my mind gradually settled down to a calm resignation to the will of God.

After the loss of my last wife, offers of marriage came to me from numerous families of my caste. Some of the virgins, on whose behalf the offers were sent to me, were so much as twenty years old. I am happy to say that although child-marriage is the prevailing custom in my caste, some girls of good families are allowed to grow up to that age, in the hope of obtaining eligible husbands for them, instead of marrying them off prematurely to indifferent mates. No money demand was made of me, and I could have contracted such a marriage without expending a large sum. But I had not the slightest desire to entertain any proposal regarding matrimony.

So far from cherishing any idea of marriage for myself, my thoughts now turned upon the general question of matrimony among the Hindoos, and the great and far-reaching evils of the system made my heart bleed. The late Mr. Cursondas Mulji, a great reformer among our people, a reformer not in words only, as alas! too many of them are, but in deeds, had been one of my very best friends, from childhood till his

death. He had fearlessly attacked and exposed the sensuality of Vaishnav Maharajas, and had earned a name in what is well known as the Maharaj Libel Case. He had started a newspaper called the *Satya Prakash*, (the Light of Truth), which was afterwards amalgamated with the *Rast Goftar*. The paper was not started with the object of making money. Its mission was a noble one, nobly carried out,— that of enlightening our people on the evils of their social customsand diffusing in them ideas of reform and progress. I used to contribute articles in the paper on child-marriage and enforced widowhood, and I particularly remember having written very severely about the marriages of little girls with old men. The poor innocents were sold by their parents for money, and were thus condemned to a life of misery and despair. I also asked myself what sin could have been committed by Hindoo women that they were absolutely prohibited from marrying again, while the males could remarry at any age and over so many number of times. Poor little girls, before they had any idea of matrimony or of the world, were married, sometimes to men of advanced age, for money, and if their husbands happened to die early, there was the prospect of life-long widowhood before them, a life of blank despair! I thought unto myself that something must be done, some sacrifice must be made, in order to oppose this inhuman and unnatural custom, which could not possibly have reason or religion on its side. I was deeply moved by these thoughts: they burned within me.

Mr. Cursondas Muljee was at Limri, managing the affairs of the state during the minority of the prince, when my wife died. He wrote to me a touching letter of condolence After sometime, I wrote, in reply to a letter from him, that

I had resolved never to marry a spinster again, but that I would either retire from the sorrows and troubles of the world, or if I at all married again, I would marry a widow. My friend warmly commended my resolve, and said that I was sure to find an eligible widow in my caste, if I were to search for one.

CHAPTER II.

—— : o : ——

A Picture of Misery.

Since my latest loss I had been in very indifferent health. I was haunted with the memory of my beloved wife in the house where we had lived together so happily. The doctor recommended me a change of scene, and I removed accordingly from the Fort to a house of Sir Munguldas Nathoobhoy in Walkeshwar. The house consisted of two stories. I lived on the second storey, and the first was occupied by a widow girl whom I afterwards married. She was living with her mother, and her brother and his wife. As I knew her mother very well, I went on the very day of my removal to Walkeshwar to see her. In the hall I saw the widow, looking very miserable, and a servant woman sitting near her. Her mother was not at home at the time. The poor widow was overcome by her feelings, on my inquiring after her health. She began to weep bitterly, and looked quite a picture of misery and despair. I could see that she was trying hard to suppress her feelings, in order to reply to my inquiries, but for a time her feelings were too strong for utterance. When at last, she was able to speak, she informed me that she had been suffering from a very violent attack of hysteria, that she was very frequently seized with lock-jaw, that she had tried many drugs but could obtain no relief. Dr. Blaney, who treated her, had told her that medicine could do nothing

for her, but that she would get better, by going about in pure and free air and by keeping her spirits cheerful. I accordingly advised her to banish all sorrow from her mind and cheer herself up.

"What happiness of this world have I," she replied, "that I can keep up my spirits? Nothing but death can relieve me of all my woes. I have abjured all food for the last twelve months. I live only on a pice worth of curd from day to day. I starve myself, in order that, any how, my end may come, as soon as possible. I have often thought of committing suicide by drowning myself in the sea or in the neighbouring tank of Walkeshwar, or by taking opium. But there are many considerations which keep me back from my wish. According to our Brahmins, the Shastras say that those who commit suicide are doomed to die a similar death seven times over in their future existence. Moreover, I myself believe that taking one's own life is as sinful as taking the life of any other person. This gives me pause, and I do not do what I would so much wish to do. I have, however, foresaken all food, in order that the happy deliverance may come to me in a short time. I have nothing in this life to live for. If I had a child of my own, I would have had something to hope for."

I was moved deeply by her tale of woe. I advised her to resign herself to her fate, to keep faith in God, and to bear her lot with patience and fortitude, in the hope that a better time would come.

Contemplating such scenes, one feels in a movement of indignation almost pursuaded to ask whether those who have committed great sins in their previous existence are not sent

back to this world by God as Brahmins and Banyas, victims, willing victims, most of them, to a vile custom. For in no other community have sanction and sanctity been given to such gross injustice as that the male can marry twenty times over, if he chooses, aye, contract a marriage, while on the brink of the grave, at the age of seventy or eighty, but that the female, even though she may have become a widow in very childhood, can never marry again. Once a widow always a widow. That is the stern, unbending commandment of folly and superstition. There can be no reason, no religion, no morality to support this huge unrighteousness.

Having given to the poor creature such comfort as I could, I went up to my own quarters to sleep. As I lay in bed, my thoughts ran upon the condition of the miserable widow and of the thousands and thousands of other widows throughout the country, in the same condition of helpless, abject, misery and despair. My mind and heart were full of the subject. Afflicted as I was by my recent bereavement, the touching story of the widow added considerably to my pain. From the depths of my aching heart, I prayed to God that He may shed His divine light upon the benighted souls of my countrymen, in order that they may see with *human* eyes the terrible woes which thousands of my Hindoo sisters and daughters are made to suffer through no fault of their own, and that, seeing them, they may restore these animals to their natural state of human beings, the state for which they have been intended and created by God. While I was uttering this fervent prayer, I thought unto myself that it did not behove a Hindoo, who beheld such hideous sores, to do nothing to heal them ; that it was idle to give oneself up to helpless

grief, doing nothing that he can in his own person to mitigate the wrong. It was no use shedding unaviling tears. I thought I must do what little I could. If none of us did anything, then the future generation would be as unhappy as the present and the past. If our fathers had done their duty, their children would not now have had to suffer so much; and I was convinced that we would only perpetuate and perhaps, aggravate the evil, if we too, shrank from our duty. We must have some people prepared to lead the way, to set the example, never mind at what personal cost and sacrifice.

This unhappy widow is a niece of Mr. Varjeewandas Madhowdas, a headman of the Kapole Banya caste. She had been married by her mother and uncles in childhood to a boy who met with an early death. Unhappy in marriage, the girl was even more so in widowhood, and her sorrowful state deeply moved me to compassion.

CHAPTER III.

——:o:——

An Alarming Advertisement.

I was now firmly resolved that if ever I should marry again at all I would marry a widow. I saw Mr. K. N. Kabrajee, editor of the *Rast Goftar*, and got an advertisement inserted in one of the issues of that influential journal, (April 1871.) offering a reward of Rs. 500 to the person who would get me a respectable widow of my caste willing to marry me.

There was great consternation in the Kapole community on the publication of this advertisement. Knowing my strong views about widow remarriage, they were generally agreed that I was the only man in our caste, who could have published the notice in the *Rast Goftar*. But while the Shettias and all were agreed that I was the only person capable of such audacity, they were also persuaded that I merely wanted to earn cheap notoriety by holding myself up before the world as a reformer that I could not possibly be sincere in my public offer to marry a widow. In this manner, they reasoned themselves out of their fears, and they allowed themselves to be deluded with the belief that the advertisement had created needless alarm, and that nothing would come of it, as, indeed, it was really meant to be nothing. As a result of these soothing reflections, the momentary excitement of the Shettias gave place to contemptuous indifference. But there was one among them who did not share this delusion with the rest of his tribe; for he knew me very

well. Sir Munguldas Nathoobhoy was at that time something like a patron of mine, and I was indebted to him for his aid to me in my business. Our relations were friendly, and I was often invited to dine at his house. He liked me much in those days and was my well-wisher. Although our friendship has entirely ceased ever since I married a widow, and although I have received no aid whatever from him since that time, I am glad to say that he has never resorted to mean tricks and intrigues against me. I have never been annoyed by him, as I am sorry to say I have been by Sheth Varjeewandas Madhowdas, Sheth Tribhowandas Vurjeewandas and Sheth Rugnathdas Gopaldas.

On reading the advertisement, Sir Munguldas wrote to me to call on him on my way to office. I went accordingly to his house in Girgaum, and I give here the questions he put to me at that interview and the answers I gave him.

Q. I have no right to ask you any questions pertaining to yourself, Mr. Madhowdas ; but since you are my companion, I think I may inquire whether it is you who have given the advertisement about widow re-marriage in the *Rast Goftar?*

A. I am, of course, not bound to answer this question. But since I regard you as my well-wisher, I have no objection to tell you that I have published the advertisement.

Q. That was very foolish of you. The time is not yet come for widow re-marriage. At-least, fifty years must elapse before the time will be ripe for it. Don't you think so ?

A. Even fifty years hence, the difficulties in the way of those who will be the first to marry widows will not be a whit

less than they are at present. Now, or a hundred years hence, the first comers will have to face the same difficulties and hardships. If our people had set the good example fifty years ago, the way for their descendants in these days would not have been beset with so many troubles and difficulties.

Q. All this is true enough. But how can you bear all the hardships of excommunication? The very trees of the wood grow and live together. If we find, here and there, a solitary tree in a plain, it is not a pleasing object to look at, because there it is so much out of place. Though widow re-marriages are permitted in inferior castes like Bhansalis, Bhavsars, Kunbis, Kumbhars and Soothars, they too will refuse to take you in, supposing you were to seek admission into their fold. Then how will you be able to live all alone? You have a daughter, what will be her fate? Who will marry her?

A. I do not want to seek admission into any other caste even if they were to accept me as their member. I want to live and die a Kapole Banya, and prove by my example that it is not so very impossible, after all, to brave the terrors of excommunication. My daughter is at present only three years old, and twelve or fourteen years more must elapse before she attains the marriageable age. In the meanwhile, there will, I hope, be a salutary change in the opinions of many people. I have no reason, therefore, to be very anxious about her. They may put me out of caste, but no one can do personal harm to myself, so long as we all are living under the just and merciful protection of England. But supposing that my enemies will be able to do their worst

against me, rest assured I shall never bend my knees to them nor shall I ever care to seek the hospitality of any other caste, even if they were to accept me as one of them. At the very worst, they would drive me to join the Brahmo Samaj which has been founded by some of the learned men of Calcutta. This sect is getting stronger day by day in numbers and influence, and they will readily admit me. But I tell you that I want to show by my example that it is possible for an excommunicated man to stand alone, and yet live in peace and comfort.

Q. I admit the force of your argument. But it is my strong advice to you to forego your intention, to stop the advertisement, and marry a spinster. What I tell you is for your own good. You are at liberty to do what you like; but if you don't listen to my advice, you will surely repent bitterly.

A. I am very thankful to you for your well-meant advice. But as you know, I have long held very strong views in favour of widow re-marriage, and if I were now to turn traitor on what I have myself said, I should be unworthy of myself. I have yet done nothing more than publish the advertisement. I am not sure of finding a respectable widow willing to marry me, and I have not found one up to now. If I can not possibly get one, then I can not fulfil the desire of my heart, and so there will be nothing for you to be anxious about.

A. Well, do you agree, at least, to this, that you will no more continue the advertisement?

A. All right, Sir, if that pleases you, I won't continue it. One insertion is quite sufficient.

I did not repeat the advertisement. But the first and only publication of the notice was quite sufficient to set the whole caste in a flutter of excitement. It was the topic of the day. The unhappy niece of Sheth Vurjeewandas and her mother had now removed from Sir Munguldas's house in Walkeswar to another in the same locality. From thence the widow had gone to live for a couple of days with her brother-in-law in town, a gentleman forty-five years old, who had just married a third wife, a child of ten! He told the widow that the custom of widow re-marriage was going to be introduced in the caste. The widow asked how that was going to be done, and she was informed of the advertisement in the *Rast Goftar*. He further told her that although the advertiser had not given his name, it was none other than Madhowdas.

"How can you say it is Madhowdas?" asked the young lady.

"There is no person in our caste, except Madhowdas, who can do such a thing, and every one believes him to be the man."

When the widow returned to Walkeshwar, she found that there too nobody talked of anything, except the advertisement. She asked her mother whether Madhowdas could possibly get a widow, such as he wanted for marriage. The mother replied scornfully, "Yes, some starving wretch of a widow might come forward to seek remarriage. But no respectable widow would ever dream of such a thing!"

As a matter of fact, I may say I had not yet found a widow, starving or well-fed. But my heart's desire was not long to remain unfulfilled. If I could not have got a widow to offer

her hand to me, the Shettias would have been confirmed in their doubts as to the sincerity of my motive. But I do not blame the Shettias for doubting my sincerity. There are so many among my people whose public professions are so sadly unlike their practice! Who say what they don't do and who do what they don't say!

CHAPTER IV.

——:o:——

The Widow and the Widower.

There was a respectable Bhattia named Cursondas Khetsey, who was a tenant in the same house in town in which lived the widow and her mother. Mr. Cursondas had also come at that time to live at Walkeshwar for a change. His wife was a great friend of the widow, who went one day to see her. The widow was full of her woes and she poured forth her heart in grief to her friend. She wept bitter tears, and said "O, my dear sister, my life has become quite insupportable. Now I have determined to kill myself, and thus put an end to my pangs and sorrows." Mathuradas Khetsey, a brother of Cursondas Khetsey, was there, when she was talking in this wise. Mathuradas had been to England, and his thoughts were liberal. He said to the weeping woman, "Bai, you are as my sister, and I will tell you one thing, if you take no offence. It is not a very wise thing on your part to talk of suicide. If you take my advice, the wisest step you can take is to re-marry."

The widow was startled by this proposal, and said it was against the custom of the caste.

"But" Mathuradas said, "what will the caste avail you when you will have committed suicide? You had better

leave caste aside, and put an end to your miseries in a more rational way, that is, by re-marriage."

When the girl enquired if there would be anybody in her caste ready to marry a widow, Mathuradas referred to my advertisement, and said that if she was willing, he would propose her name to me, though he had never before had any conversation with me on the subject.

The widow thanked Mr. Mathuradas for offering his kind services, but said she did not think any good would come of his mediation. She did not think it was at all likely that I would marry a widow, whose mother and uncles were intimately known to me. She, however, added that she knew me very well, and that if she thought it advisable she would manage to see me herself.

Mr. Mathuradas subsequently went to see Mr. Cursondas Muljee, who had come here from Limri on business and had put up at the bungalow of Sheth Lakhmidas Khimji on Malabar Hill. Mathuradas informed Mr. Cursondas of all that had passed between him and the widow, who, he said, intended to see Mr. Madhowdas herself. On hearing this, Mr. Cursondas was very pleased, and when we met, he told me that, after all, I was likely to succeed in my object. He acquainted me with all that Mr. Mathuradas had told him, and advised me to give an encouraging reception to the widow, if she came to see me. I replied that I would do so, but that if she did not come to me, I would not myself go to her, because I did not like any one afterwards to say that I had induced her to marry me.

The next day, the widow went again to her brother-in-law at Baherkote. At that time, the wife of Sheth Manmohandas

Devidas, a cousin of Vurjeewandas Madhowdas, was dead, and according to the Hindoo custom, it was the duty of the friends and relatives to go to the dead person's house, to condole with the bereaved family in the approved fashion. By order of her brother-in-law the widow, taking his young wife with her, went to Manmohandas's house in the Fort. On their return, the girl proposed to the widow that they should go to see on their way home, one of her relatives who was ill. The widow told the girl that it would not be considered auspicious to go direct from a dead person's house to visit a sick man, but that they might look into the house of Madhowdas, and wash their hands and feet there, before returning home. So they came. At the door of my house was sitting a servant of mine, and the widow asked him to inform his master that Dhankorbai was there and that she wanted a *lota* of water. The servant did not think I should be troubled with the message, since all that the lady wanted was some water. When the servant brought a jug of water to her, she inquired whether he had informed his master of her arrival. He said he had not, but on being told again to do so, he came in and said that a lady, calling herself Dhunkorbai, wanted to see me. I did not know who the lady could be, and why she wanted to see me. I was on the first storey of my house at the time, and as I was going down to receive her, I saw the widow standing in the middle of the stair-case, while the girl was standing at the foot of it.

As I stood with an enquiring look at her, she explained that she had been with her sister-in-law to the house of Munmohundas, and that they had called at mine to wash their hands and feet before returning home. Her manner was constrained and embarrassed; she addressed me in a low

tremulous tone ; and then she hung down her head. I perceived that she wanted to tell me something about the real object of her visit, and that she was trying to speak, but could not. There was shame and grief in her look.

Knowing the real object of her visit, I gave her to understand that if she wished to carry out the suggestion of Mathuradas Khetsey, I was prepared to marry her. Dhunkorebai, who had, for a moment, raised her head, again looked down, and replied that, for her part, she was willing, provided her mother gave her consent.

" You are making a sad mistake," I said, " to suppose that your mother will ever give her consent to your re-marriage. It is hopeless to expect her to sanction it. She would very much prefer that you die a thousand deaths rather than that you should marry once again. If you were even just to give her a hint about your wish to re-marry, it will go very hard with you. Your mother will keep you as a prisoner in her house. She will never let you alone, and you will be deprived of whatever little freedom you now enjoy. Her eye will always be upon you. I know that your mother is a very simple and kind-hearted woman, and I dare say she is deeply grieved to see you so unhappy. She herself lost her husband early in life, and she knows, therefore, by bitter experience, what it is to be a widow. But with all that, she will never consent to your re-marriage. She will be horrified at the very thought of it ! But supposing she has herself no objection to it, she would fear to offend her uncles, Gopaldas, Vurjeewandas and Narotamdas Madhowdas. They are rich. She is poor, and in a manner, dependent upon them. The are uncompromising enemies of reform and progress, and she dare not cross their will. Therefore, leave aside all thought of asking your

mother. You need to have courage and self-reliance yourself, if you wish to re-marry. For my part, I solemnly declare that if you consent to become my wife, it shall ever be my endeavour to make you happy; and so long as I live, I will see that not the least harm is done to you by any one. Now you may do what you like."

Dhunkore listened to every word that fell from my lips with deep attention, and said that she would earnestly think over the matter, before she gave a definite answer. I asked her to come, as soon as possible, to a final resolve, whatever that might be; because if she decided to re-marry, I very much wished that the union should take place, while Mr. Cursondas Muljee was in Bombay. He was my great friend, and I highly valued his assistance and advice. Again, delay might raise new difficulties and bring disappointment, so it was best to come to a prompt decision and act promptly upon it.

Dhunkore promised to send me a reply without undue delay, and said that if she decided to re-marry, she would marry me and no one else.

After this, she left in company with her sister-in-law. As I have said already, the little woman was yet barely in her teens, and so she could scarcely understand the import of the conversation I had with Dhunkore. The lawful wife of an elderly man of forty-five was but a simple, innocent child!

CHAPTER V.

—:o:—

A Struggle and A Resolve.

Dhunkore went to her mother's house and debated the question of her re-marriage long and deeply within herself. There was a terrible struggle in her heart. Now she decided to take the *fatal* step and put an end to her miseries; now she drew back from her resolve for the sake of her mother. Yes, the poor old woman would become very miserable, if her daughter became happy. Then the thought of being the first in her caste to break a time-honoured custom, however vile and senseless it was, came upon her. She would raise against her a storm of execration and indignation on all sides. She would be reviled as a bad and sinful woman. She would never be able to see the face of her dear mother or her nearest relatives. To them she would be an object to be shunned and turned away from. They would never look upon her face, dead or alive,—to them she would be worse than dead! Never mind, if a widow went astray, or lived as somebody's mistress. Anything would be permissible, tolerable, forgiveable, but marriage. That was an inexpiable sin for a widow to commit.

The struggle that went on in her heart was intense. Her feelings alternated between hope, fear, shame, and despair.

Most sad that there should be such a conflict of emotions, when one has to choose between what is clearly right and and what is grossly, palpably, infamously wrong! To this day, my wife has retained a vivid recollection of the painful days and nights during which her whole soul was absorbed in these thoughts. In her desperation, she resolved to sound her mother upon the subject, hoping against hope to find some encouragement from her. She was, of course, particularly careful to avoid all reference to her own intentions in her conversation with her mother. She knew, as well as her mother, that many young widows, who go astray, commit abortion, or are taken by their parents to a quiet place, under pretence of going on a pilgrimage, and there they are delivered of the burden of their sin. Their towns-people generally are not aware of the real object of the "pilgrimage." It is known to a few persons, intimately connected with the families of the unfortunate women, and they, of course, shut their eyes to what has been done, and hold their peace. Dhunkore put it to her mother whether the temptations for going wrong would not be withdrawn, if widows were allowed to remarry and live honourably. Her mother replied that widow remarriage would no doubt be a very good thing, but so long as the old Shethias of the caste were alive, it was idle even to hope for such an innovation.

Dhunkore then went to her mother's mother and put the same question to her. She replied, "My dear daughter,—it would be a very good thing, if widows were allowed to remarry. But what is a good thing for others may not be a good thing for Brahmins and Banyas. જે વાત અરગે તે અરગે કાંઇ વાણીઆ બ્રાહ્મણ તે ગરગે? So such remarriages are impossible among Brahmins and Banyas. She dismissed,

the good old woman,—the very idea of remarriage as something ungodly, something awful even to think of by high caste Brahmins and Banyas. It may be all very well for inferior castes. Such was the philosophy involved in the Gujerati saying.

Dhunkore then went to a cousin of Vurjeewandas, a woman of mature age, very wise and very sensible. She was called Hurkhi Shethani. To her Dhunkore put the same question, and she replied, "Yes, my dear girl, it would be so good if widows were allowed to remarry. There would not then be sins committed in secret by these victims of custom. But we are helpless. No one dares say a word about widow remarriage."

Dhunkore then went to an intimate friend of hers, the wife of a native doctor, and she put the same question to her. She also let her into the secret of her intention to remarry, saying that there was a respectable member of her caste who was willing to accept her hand. What would her confidante advise her? Her friend approved of her intention, but she inquired who the man was, and whether his word was to be trusted. Supposing he jilted her, her character would be seriously compromised, and she would be disgraced for life.

Dhunkore said: "I thank you for your warning. But I assure you he is not capable of such villainy. He is a very good man; my mother always speaks highly of him. His late wife was a relative of mine. She was a constant invalid, suffering from rheumatism, but he treated her with the greatest kindness. He is also in comfortable circumstances. He has a carriage and horse, and has servants in

his house. I don't believe, for a moment, that I shall be unhappy, as his wife. But if fate has decreed otherwise, then I must submit to my lot. I cannot, in any case, possibly be more miserable than I am now."

"Well, if you are sure of your man," said her friend, "then, by all means, marry him. I shall be rejoiced to see you comfortable and happy. I do not know your intended husband, and therefore, thought it my duty to give you the warning. May God bless you in the new life into which you are going to enter!"

Dhunkore was now finally resolved to remarry. She went home and sent me with her servant a note which, ever since I received it, I have fondly cherished as a memento of the happy event which it led to. The note, which was in Gujerati, was as follows :—

"I pondered deeply over the matter for four days after I saw you. I hate, with all my heart, the immoral life led by some of the young widows of our caste ; and at the same time, I fear to commit the great sin of suicide. Again, so long as my beloved mother is alive, I have nothing to be anxious about. May she live for a hundred years ! But if, God forbid, anything happens to her, what would be my fate ! There would be no one to protect me. I would not like to live under the roof of my brother and his wife, and to hear, perchance, their taunts for a piece of bread they would give me to eat. Whatever property I had in this world has been quietly appropriated by my relatives. If I were to demand it from them, I would be as an enemy to them. For these reasons, I have now taken my final resolve, and am prepared to adopt the best way, according

to your wish. There will now be no more delay on my part. God has also told me in my dreams to adopt the same course, and I am prepared, in all thankfulness of heart, to do the bidding of God. That is all I have to say for the present.—I am, willing to be your Servant,

DHUN."

CHAPTER VI.

—:o:—

Marriage.

This note filled my whole being with joy. It gave rise to a thousand-and-one thoughts in my mind. I felt that there must surely be the hand of God directing my purpose to a successful end. But a few days ago, I had scarcely expected that I should ever find an eligible widow willing to be my wife, still less that I should be so fortunate as to find one so soon. I thanked God for the opportunity that was offered me of carrying out my intention, and thus showing the Shettias of my caste, who fondly imagined that I had advertised myself from a mere love of notoriety that I had all along been perfectly sincere in my professions, and that I was prepared to demonstrate, by my own example, the good of widow re-marriage.

I took the note to Cursondas Mooljee. He too was exceedingly pleased to read it. He said we should at-once proceed to make preparations for the wedding. A widow re-marriage is not an ordinary event, and, therefore, we had to take all due precautions and safe-guards, in order to bring it to a successful issue. We fixed Tuesday, the 2nd of May, for the wedding, and my friend told me to write at once to Dhunkore, informing her of the day and giving

her some necessary directions for her guidance. The note which I wrote to her was to this effect :—

"My dear wife of the future, Dunkore,——I have received your note, written in your own beautiful hand, and on reading it, my heart was filled with joy. Now I shall be busy making preparations for the event. Heaven has pointed out to you the wisest course you could take. Believe me, there is most certainly the hand of God in all this; there is not the least doubt about it. Those who will hereafter become our enemies are very powerful, on account of their wealth and position. We are like little insects before them. But God Almighty will give us courage and strength to withstand their opposition, and God Almighty will protect us. Therefore, you need have no fear whatever in your heart. The auspicious day, which has been fixed for carrying out our intention, is Samwat 1927, Vaisakh Shud 12 (Tuesday the 2nd May). On that day at 1 P.M., be ready and stand at the window of your house. I shall send Mathuradas Khersey to wait for you in front of your house, and as soon as you see him, you will come down and follow him, to the place where he will lead you. I shall keep a carriage ready for you near the bungalow of Sheth Lukhmidas Khimjee, and, with my friend Mr. Cursondas, shall await there your arrival. I have to warn you not to bring with you a pie's worth of any property, except the clothes in which you stand. Leave behind whatever else is yours, at your mother's. If you were to bring with you any article, of however trivial a value, our enemies will try to annoy us and put us into trouble by preferring a

charge of theft against us. You will, therefore, be extremely cautions in this respect. I am not a beggar that you should deem it necessary to bring with you any of your property. There will be no necessity for my writing to you another note; you will, therefore, take this as my final communication.

I am,
Willing to accept your hand,
MADHOO BHULA.

The signature requires a word of explanation. When I was a little boy, my companions, had given me the *sobriquet* of Madhoo Bhula."

After I had sent the note, I had a consultation at my house with Mr. Kaikhoshru N. Kabraji and Mr. Cursondas Mulji, as to the best way in which we should proceed, in order to carry out our intention. The first thing I did was to go with Mr. Cursondas to see the late Sir Frank Souter, Commissioner of Police. We fully explained to him the difficulties and dangers which the parties to widow remarriage had to provide against, and we asked for his aid which he most willingly agreed to give. We rented a bungalow at Chinchpogli for a month. The place was quiet and secluded, and therefore, suited to our purpose. We then went to see the proprietor of the *Indu Prakash*, the great advocate of widow remarriage, Vishnu Parashram Shastri, and acquainted him with our purpose and our plan. We also requested him to make all arrangements for the marriage ceremony, and to come to the bungalow, with his friends, on the appointed day, as soon as he should receive

an intimation to start for the place. We then saw another friend and asked him to keep ready two carriages in front of Sheth Lukhmidas Khimji's bungalow, and to see that the horses were very swift and spirited animals. He readily complied with our request. Lukhmidas Khimjee was the next man we saw, and he willingly undertook to send a European band, and flowers and *pansopari* to the bungalow at Chinchpogli on the marriage day. There were two native Magistrates on the Bench at that time, both friends of reform, Messrs. Nana Moroji and Mahadeo Govind Ranade. They were made acquainted with all the facts of the case, and they accepted with great pleasure my invitation to be present at the marriage. We went once more to see Sir Frank Souter, and at our request he agreed to send a body of police to keep order at the Chinchpogli bungalow and four more detectives at the bungalow of Sheth Lukhmidas. Word was sent round to a few friends and sympathizers to be present at a certain widow remarriage that was about to take place. It was not considered prudent to inform them all who the parties were.

Now came the marriage day, the 2nd May 1871. It marks an epoch in the history of Gujerati Banyas. I am so sorry that what should be an ordinary social event of no concern whatever to anybody save the parties directly interested in it, comes to be regarded as a public event, affecting and deeply strirring a whole community! I am ever so sorry for this, because its importance is not its own, but is attached to it by custom upheld by passion, unreason and bigotry. And our people are so slow to move that I fear it will yet be very long before it will be taken as an ordinary incident of domestic life. It is for this reason

that I say the day of my remarriage was memorable, fraught with pleasant memories to some, and bitter to others. I could not sleep on the night previous to the marriage. My mind was absorbed in a thousand different thoughts. I devoutly hoped that my undertaking would not prove an ignominious failure. Supposing the courage of Dhunkore failed her at the last moment, or my design came to be known to my caste people, they would do everything in their power to frustrate it, and, in that case, I would become their laughing stock. It was possible that some of the Shettias might have got scent of the affair, and prepared themselves to frustrate my object. For my part, I had taken every possible precaution to ensure secrecy and success, and I hoped for the best. I rose early in the morning, and after ablution and prayers, put on new clothes. Before leaving the house, I gave instructions to my servants that I was going out on some important business, and that if I did not return at the usual hour in the evening, they were to understand that I was detained by business and must not keep up. I then went to the house of Cursondas Muljee, taking with me my daughter, who was then three years old. As arranged, the carriages were ready at the spot, as well as the policemen who had been kindly sent by Sir Frank Souter for our protection. At the appointed hour, Mathuradas Khersey was deputed to bring Dhunkore with him.

As may be imagined, Dunkore too could not sleep well overnight. She tossed about with uneasy and anxious thoughts. But whatever her doubts and fears, she remained firm in her resolve. She got out of her bed early and made all preparations for her final departure from the house which she was never to see any more. Retiring into a quiet part

of her house, she wrote a letter to her mother which was to this effect :—

"Be it known to my dear mother that not being able to bear the cruel pangs of widowhood, I forsook all kinds of food, and ate only a piece of curd every day. The consequence was that I became very weak, but did not die, as I hoped. Instead of death, I was afflicted with hysteria and lock-jaw. My dear mother, as long as you are alive, I have nothing to fear. But after you have gone, I do not think I can stay a single day under the roof of my brother and his wife. Then, being alone, I would be left without the protection of anybody. But instead of doing such a thing, I have taken this course, which is the best one. My dear mother, it is not at all likely that we shall meet again hereafter. You may, therefore, take me for dead. But I shall be very happy, if I shall ever hear from the lips of any one that you are all doing well. I have not done this thing at the instigation of any one, but have resolved upon it of my own free will ; so you will not blame any-body for it. I have taken away nothing from your house, and you will kindly see for yourself that all your property is quite safe. Kindly give away the ornaments of Thakorjee to some good man who will dully perform the *puja* of the deity. I have given my *Hem* thread of gold to my uncle to sell, and I ask you to divide whatever money it will fetch, as well as my wearing apparel, which I leave behind, between the daughters of my brother and my sister. My final greetings to you all.

I remain,

Your beloved but unhappy daughter,

DHUNKORE."

Dhunkore placed this note in one of the boxes in the house. She then washed herself, ate her daily dole of curd, and stood at the window. No wonder that her mind was swimming at the time with thoughts and emotions of a strange, conflicting kind. Her mother went about her usual household work, little suspecting what was going very shortly to happen—that she was never to look upon the face of her daughter again! To her mother, her dear daughter was henceforth to be as dead,—worse then dead! No wonder that her heart should burn with very strange feelings.

She stood at the window, looking for the man who was to guide her to her destination. Her brother had gone to his business in the share market in the Fort, and her mother too happily went out that morning to pay a condolatory visit at the house of Sheth Munmohandas who, as I said before, had recently lost his wife. So she had no difficulty in leaving her house, as soon as she saw Mathuradas Khersey standing in front of it. Before leaving she told her brother's wife that she was going on a visit to a relative, who was living at that time at Walkeshwar. Dunkore followed Mathuradas as far as the bungalow of Lukmidas, where I had been waiting for her, in company with Cursondas Muljee. Dhunkore was at-once conveyed into one of the carriages which were in readiness. I and my infant daughter, Gomi, sat with her in the same carriage. Another carriage was occupied by Cursondas and Mathuradas, and a third by the police-men on special duty.

Dhunkore was trembling from head to foot, she sat in a corner of the carriage pale and speechless, with her head cast down and her *saree* drawn over her face. She was, for the time being, in a very weak state of mind and body.

I very much feared lest one of her hysterical fits should come on her at that time. She feared very much lest some of her relatives should get scent of the affair, and take her back by force to her home and keep her there under strict surveillance for life. Then the story of her flight and ignominious return as a captive would go abroad. Rumour and gossip would exaggerate it, and malicious scandal would be busy undermining her character and her reputation. She, therefore, feared capture very much. I feared it still more. She had lost all control of mind, and she had scarcely strength enough to face her relatives, if by any chance they could have presented themselves before her at the time. She would have been stricken with shame at their cruel taunts and reproaches, and she would probably have yielded herself up a helpless captive into their hands. Such a sorrowful ending of our plans and preparations would have covered us with ignominy, however undeserved. My caste-people, jubilant at the overthrow of my design, would have perversely refused to believe in the purity of my intentions. They would have reviled me with unsparing malignance. What I feared more than personal disgrace was the blow which my failure would have given to the cause which was so dear to my heart. The cause of widow remarriage, so far from advancing by ever so little, would have retrograded still further back, and the prospect would, if possible, have become still more dark and dismal.

On our start, an accident occurred, which added greatly to our terror. The road from Mr. Lukhmidás's bungalow was very narrow, and it was very difficult to turn the carriages. While the coachman was trying to do this, one of the horses became restive and broke a pole. Every

minute was of the utmost value to us. If delay was ever dangerous to any one, it was to us ; and, therefore, an accident at such a juncture was most unfortunate. No time was lost in tying up the broken parts with a strong cord, and away we went at a rattling pace, arriving at our destination earlier than might have been expected.

In the compound of the bungalow we saw a body of policemen under a European officer, and we were much reassured by their presence. I and Dhunkore went into the bungalow and sat there. Cursondas and Mathuradas went back to the town, picking up Mulji Thakersey on the way ; and they informed our friends of the hour at which they were to be present at Chinchpogly. At about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, Vishnu Shastri came with all the necessaries of nuptial rites, and he was accompanied by some of his friends. The guests began gradually to pour in, and by 5 o'clock there was a very pleasant gathering of about 200 persons including a few ladies. Among the guests who, so far as I remember, were present on the occasion, were Messrs. Nana Morojee, Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Lukhmidas Khimji, J. Jefferson (Solicitor), Bala Mungesh Wagle, Dr. Atmaram Pandurang, Messrs. Balajee Pandurang, Bhaishankar Nanabhoy, Janardhan Succaram Gadgil, Kaikhosru N. Kabraji, Maneckji Barjorji (of the *Bombay Samachar*), Nanabhoy R. Ranina, Thakersey Naronji, Liladhar Odhewji, Merwanji F. Murzban, Jehangeer B. Murzban, Cursondas Mulji, Mulji Thakersey, Mathuradas Khersey, Narayen Mahadeo Parmanand, Bhaskerrao Hari Bhagwat, Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, Pandit Vishnu Parasram Shastri, Dadoba Pandurang, Wasoodeo Balaji Navrange, Dr. Dhirajram Dalpatram, &c.

Before the marriage service was commenced, an agreement by which I had settled a sum of Rs. 8,000 upon my wife as a wedding present was read before the company, both in English and Gujerati. The agreement was then duly signed by me and my wife, and in presence of the two magistrates, four of the gentlemen present attested the document. This was soon followed by the ceremony which sanctified our union. My dear friend Cursondas Muljee, acting as god-father to the bride, gave her away. Thus, after a world of trouble and anxiety, we were united never more to be separated but by death.

The company dispersed at about 6 o'clock. Cursondas Muljee, Mathuradas Khersey, and Muljee Thakersey stayed behind and passed the night in the bungalow. The police guard also left the place, leaving only one man to keep a watch through the night. The European inspector of the Division, who lived at a short distance from our bungalow, told us to send for him, should his assistance be required at any time, and he also undertook to come round at night to see that all was safe. He told us to be afraid of nothing, but we passed the night in great fear, lest our enemies should send some hired ruffians against us. The inspector had supplied us with a few sticks, in case we should have to use them. We had ourselves taken the precaution of engaging four powerful Pathans to guard the place. But the night was passed in peace and I thanked God there had been no mishap, thus far.

CHAPTER VII.

——:o:——

Lamentations.—Consternation.—Rejoicings.

Great was the alarm at Dhunkore's house at her disappearance no one knew whither. When her mother returned in the evening from the Fort, she was told by her daughter-in-law that Dhunkore had gone out in the morning, saying that she was going on a vist to her brother's wife. A servant was fetched thither, but he came back with the news that Dhunkore had not been there that day. Inquiries were made at two or three other likely places in Walkeshwar, but from everywhere the reply was the same — Dhunkore had not at all been there that day. Her mother grew alarmed at her strange disappearance. Men were sent out in the town to inquire about Dhunkore at the houses of her grand-mother, her brother-in-law, and one or two other relatives. But they, of course, knew nothing about Dhunkore. Now her poor mother's alarms increased greatly. She feared the worst. Dhunkore used often to say she would much rather die than drag on a miserable existence. Might she not have fallen into the holy tank at Walkeshwar, or some other well in the neighbourhood? Every possible conjecture was made but the right one. It did not occur to any one that Dhunkore had entered upon a new life—that she had gone "no more to be a doleful widow, but joyous, and once again a bride."

How could such a thing occur to them? That was impossible! Everything was possible but that! If she had killed herself, because she could not bear the living death of widowhood, her grievous act would have been understandable, forgiveable. But it was impossible to conceive that she would be capable of an enormity which would bring everlasting disgrace upon her respectable family. So, fearing the worst, but never even so much as dreaming of what, in their eyes, was worse than that, the poor mother of Dhunkore and her numerous relatives, who, on hearing of her disappearance had come up to Walkeshwar, lit up torches and set out, a doleful procession, to search for the missing body by the sea-shore, and in the neighbouring wells and tanks.

They went about in fruitless search till midnight, when, at last, Lukhmidas, Dhunkore's brother, started for town to make further inquiries. While he was standing at the Walkeshwar police station waiting for a carriage, Thakersey Naronjee, who was present at my wedding, was driving back to his house at Walkeshwar. He stopped his carriage and asked Lukhmidas why he was standing there at that hour of night. When Lukhmidas told him the reason, Mr. Thakersey said "You had better return home. You need not search any more for your sister. She is safe and well-placed." Lukhmidas eagerly inquired, where? Thakersey replied, "Your sister has married Madhowdas Rugnathdas. I was myself present at the wedding; and here is a nose-gay that I have brought from there." Lukhmidas was anxious to know where the marriage had taken place, but Thakersey did not consider it prudent to give him the information. If, he said, Lukhmidas would only wait till the morning, he would learn all about it from the papers.

The news that, after all, his sister was safe and well brought no joy to Lukhmidas!

In the meanwhile, his mother and all her relatives were waiting for his return in painful expectancy. In the stillness of the night, they heard, at last, a sound as of loud lamentation, and as the sound became more distinct, they could make out that it was the voice of Lukhmidas. As he approached the house, his mother and his grandmother, his sister and his wife, and all the rest of his friends and relations who had assembled there, joined in a chorus of cries. The women beat their breasts and foreheads, and the demonstrations of grief were loud enough to startle the whole neighbourhood. It was not before some time had elapsed that it occured to one of the mourners to inquire of Lukhmidas what had happened. Lukhmidas told the story of Dhunkore's wrong-doing, whereupon the cries and lamentations of the mourning party grew louder and more vehement. They could never have dreamt that the news would be so very bad. The cries of grief attracted the neighbours to the scene, and some of the sensible men among them tried in vain to console the bereaved. After the first burst of grief was over and comparative quiet was restored, Dhunkore's box was opened and on turning over its contents, they lighted upon the note which she had left there. Its perusal excited the mourners to fresh outbursts of grief. Her poor old mother and her other near relatives were inconsolable. Nothing could comfort them. Nothing could persuade them to touch food. The house was wrapped in gloom.

A man was despatched to the relatives of Dhunkore, Vurjeewandas Madhowdas, Gopaldas Madhowdas and Mun-

galdas Nathoobhoy to break the fatal news to them. They all heard it with dismay, but as it was then the dead of night, they resolved to postpone operations till the morrow.

In the morning, the *Times of India*, the *Bombay Gazette*, and the *Bombay Samachar* were out with accounts of the widow re-marriage. The previous night, a report of the event had spread among a few people in the town, and they did not know how far to believe it. But whatever doubts they had in their minds were settled on reading the papers the next morning. The news created the greatest excitement in the Hindoo community. There was an extraordinary demand for the papers that day. They were read in every house and in every street. On the public roads were to be seen knots of men gathered round persons reading aloud to them the account of the re-marriage from the papers.

The effect produced by this event was different in different minds. Thousands of men who, at least in theory, were in favour of widow re-marriage were very joyful. On the other hand, there was a vast number of men who received the news with pain and indignation. Some of the wise men among them shrugged their shoulders and observed that such things were only possible in this Kali Yug, this Iron Age of the present. All good was coming to an end and ruin was impending on society. The marriage was the topic of the town. For days the people could almost think of nothing else. Extravagant reports, however fantastic and absurd, spread fast among the community and were eagerly believed by many. Many a young widow was, no doubt, glad in her heart for the occurrence of an event which raised in them some hope of their own deliverance. But for the present their parents and guardians kept a stricter watch over them

than before, lest they should catch the pernicious example of the erring one who had gone astray from the fold.

Besides giving an account of the wedding, the *Bombay Samachar* had also published verses specially composed for the occasion. They expressed joy at an event which, it was said, had dealt a severe blow at tyrant custom. For some weeks the lines were sung with great spirit by boys in the streets. Mr. Kabrajee, who came to see us in the evening, taught the song to my wife, who was persuaded to overcome her shyness and sing it herself in his presence. Mr. Kabrajee heartily congratulated me on my having for a wife an educated and sweet-voiced woman.

The next morning, Mr. Sorabjee Shapoorjee Bengalee came to congratulate me on my marriage, and after assuring me of the pleasure he had felt on reading of it in the papers, he said he would also congratulate his partner, Mr. Vurjeewandas Madhowdas, as he was so very nearly related to the bride. I told Mr. Sorabjee that Mr. Vurjeewandas would not, perhaps, receive his congratulations with pleasure, but would rather be offended by them. Mr. Sorabjee could scarcely believe this, because, he said, Vurjeewandas had frequently expressed to him his hatred of the superstitious customs of his caste, and his apparently heartfelt desire that his people should have the enlightenment to perceive the good of widow re-marriage. How, then, could Mr. Vurjeewandas be sorry that it was given to a member of his own family to make a happy beginning?

Mr. Sorabjee then left, promising to call again in the evening. When he went to office, he told Mr. Vurjeewandas that he was exceedingly glad that the first widow,

who had re-married in his caste, was a near relative of his. In spite of my warning, Mr. Sorabjee little suspected that his partner would do anything but reciprocate the joy which he felt in his own heart. For had not Vurjeewandas often given him to understand that he was a staunch advocate of widow re-marriage? But Mr. Vurjeewandas was deeply offended by the words of Mr. Sorabjee, and for several days he did not exchange a word with him. He was much enraged by what Mr. Sorabjee had innocently said to him, and the only answer he gave him was, "You ought not to have spoken about this matter to me."

CHAPTER VIII.

—— : o : ——

Troubles and Trials.

I sent my servant, along with the Cabulees whom I had specially engaged, to remove my furniture from Sir Mungaldas's house in Walkeshwar to my residence at Chinchpogli. They brought word that on the road to Walkeshwar they had seen some ruffians lying in wait for Mr. Cursondas, and that, therefore, he should take very great care, when he returned that day to Walkeshwar. The ruffians had been hired by some of our enemies who evidently believed Mr. Cursondas, the sincere and stout-hearted champion of reform, to be the fount and origin of the great social scandal which had just been perpetrated, and who, therefore, wanted to wreak their vengeance upon him by planning a cowardly assault on his person. When Mr. Sorabjee Bengalee and Mr. Lukhmidas Khimjee called again in the evening, Mr. Cursondas informed them of the designs of his enemies; whereupon they both undertook to drive with him to Walkeshwar. On their way, they saw the mercenaries going back to their homes, after having waited in vain for their prey the whole day. Cursondas and his party saw the ruffians, but as none of the band had seen Cursondas before, they let him pass unmolested. Since none of them knew Mr. Cursondas, they must have been supplied with a minute description of his

personal appearance ; and, therefore, even though some of the hirelings might have suspected that one of the three gentlemen whom they saw driving down in a carriage and pair was their man, they had not the courage to attack the whole party. Mr. Cursondas was safely lodged that evening in Sheth Luckmidas' bungalow, but the next day he came to stay with us at Chinchpogli.

Mr. Cursondas left the following day for Limri. Both my wife and myself were exceedingly sorry to part with him. He was our truest of true friends, and his counsel and company were of great value to us at that time. He, too, was deeply affected, as we could see. He would have very much liked to stay with us a few days longer; but he must return to his duties in time. He asked Dhunkore to write to him daily, stating how things went with us here. He also asked her to accept, on his behalf, a present of four gold bangles. He hoped that, God willing, the day would soon come, when we would all live together in happiness. But that was not to be. We were never to see him more.

We felt lonely by his going away, and we missed him more than ever, as our troubles commenced. Those who had deposited money with my firm no longer felt that their money was quite safe. They were fully persuaded that my business would soon go to ruin and I would be a penniless beggar, for having offended the high and mighty of my caste by marrying a widow of one of their first families. The Shethias had wealth ; they had great influence with Government—so they thought, these poor, deluded folk !—and for them it would be the easiest thing in the world to crush the man who had dared offend them by doing what none had hitherto dared. A life of struggles and misery

and abject want was in store for the husband and wife. Mother Earth would refuse to give them shelter. Outcast and homeless and moneyless, their lot would be to wander about till death would mercifully relieve them of their pain; and then nobody would know where or how they had come by their end. Rao Bahadoor Moroba Kanoba was the first among the Prabhus to marry a widow. A short time after their marriage, the corpses of both husband and wife were found floating in a well. None could tell whether the ill-fated pair had fallen into the well themselves, or had been thrown into it by some villains. However that was, such was the end of the poor man and his wife. Rao Bahadoor Moroba was a a high Government official, no less than a Judge of the Bombay Small Causes Court; and if he, a man of position, had met with such fate, how could Madhowdas escape it—a humble individual of modest means and without any official position?

Alarmed by these thoughts, the depositors made a rush for their money. My manager came to me in the evening and informed me of the state of things. I did not consider it prudent to stay longer at Chinchpogli, away from men and business, and at once resolved to remove to my house in the Fort, where I also transacted my business. The house belonged to Sir Munguldas, and as he, too, was related to Dhunkore, I was not sure whether he would allow me to stay there as his tenant any longer. If he were to ask me to vacate the house at once, I might, of course, go to any other place to live in. But here I had been fairly settled in business, and feared that a removal of my shop to another place would very probably do serious harm to my business. And then, again, the depositors on all sides clamoured for

repayment of their money. I, therefore, requested Mr. Lukhmidas Khimjee to see Sir Munguldas and learn his intentions. Munguldas said that I should not, for the present, return to live in his house, because although he had taken no part whatever in the remarriage, his enemies, the family of Sheth Vurjeewandas, were endeavouring to excite his caste-people against him, by spreading the report among them that he was secretly in favour of the union. These misrepresentations were calculated to lower him in the eyes of his caste, and, therefore, he did not consider it judicious on his part to permit me to occupy the house for some time to come. Sir Munguldas, however, promised Sheth Lukmidas that he would not make me vacate the shop, and that after things had quieted down, he would have no objection to let me go to live there too. When I heard this from Sheth Lukhmidas, I asked him to convey my thanks to my landlord for allowing my shop to remain.

The next day I went in a carriage to my shop, taking, one of the Cabulee Pathans as my body-guard. Whatever money I had at the time had been employed in my trader and it was not possible to realize a fair amount from the sale of my goods, if I were to dispose it of at once te meet the demands of my creditors. It was fortunate that it had not been my practice to accept large deposits, never letting their total amount exceed ten or twelve thousand rupees. I had feared a rush for the money, and in anticipation of such a contingency, I had borrowed a loan of Rs. 4,000 from Cursondas, and further sums of money from other friends. I had, therefore, sufficient to meet the demands of my creditors, in whom confidence in the solvency of my business was, however, restored by degrees, in spite of rumours to the contray

sedulously spread by my ill-wishers. This was the first attempt of my enemies to ruin me, but they were foiled in it, and, thank God, I am still as far as ever from the terrible end which had been predicted for me.

I now removed from Chinchpogli to the Fort, where I rented a house belonging to Mr. Thakersey Mulji. Ours was the first widow remarriage in Bombay among Gujerati Hindoos It was a thing unheard of before, and people were curious to see the pair which had done what nobody believed could ever be done by any one. At the hour of our driving out in the evening, crowds used to assemble in front of our house, and they would stay there to see us, refusing to move on, in spite of the gentle remonstrances of the police, emphasized at times by their batons. After we had come down and driven away, the crowd would quietly disperse. This lasted for a month; but during all that time, the spectators never gave vent to any demonstration of disapproval. They came there, drawn by curiosity and wonderment, and having satisfied themselves, they went away peacefully. Would to God that my community may become rational enough to regard widow re-marriage no longer with any wondering curiosity, but as an ordinary social event of no particular interest to the public.

For some weeks after my marriage, articles and verses in favour of the reform continued to appear in the *Bombay Samachar*, the *Rast Goftar*, *Arya Mitra* and other journals, and they were read with much interest. Thousands of hand-bills, containing a reprint of songs, were distributed free in the town, at the expense of some friends of social reform. The songs were sung in every street. They were in almost everybody's mouth. Children especially sang them with

delight. There was to them something so new in the very idea of widow re-marriage; and there was, I believe, nothing in it repugnant to their innocent feelings, not yet corrupted by custom. The proprietor of a newspaper published the songs in the form of a pamphlet, and some thousands of copies, sold for an anna each, were disposed of both in Bombay and the districts. Another brought out a costlier edition, selling each copy for four annas. It was also sold off by thousands. I was glad of the interest excited among my community, for I hoped it would lead to good. I hoped it might lead them seriously to consider whether widow re-m rriage was such a very bad and wicked thing, after all.

CHAPTER IX.

—— : o : ——

Excommunication.

I have said already that Dhunkore's uncles received the intelligence of her re-marriage at midnight. They would, no doubt, have tried to recover their erring niece, if by any means they could get at her; and would have inflicted punishment, if they could, on the person who had taken her away. But when they rose in the morning and read the accounts in the *Bombay Gazette* and the *Times of India*, they must have seen that the marriage had been duly celebrated under police protection, and in the presence of a most respectable company which included two Hindoo magistrates. Now they exercised their minds to discover means, whereby they could show their disgust and hatred of the persons who had dared to act in defiance of custom. So Dhunkore's uncles, Gopaldas, Vurjeewandas and Narotamdas, and Purshotamdas Mohandas put their heads together and resolved to put me and my wife out of caste. Being anxious to avoid getting into trouble by taking any hasty or injudicious step against us, they took, in the first place, the precaution to inquire in what manner the Prabhu community had excommunicated Moroba Canoba and his wife for a similar offence. They obtained a copy of the document relating to the excommunication of that unfortunate couple, and having

drafted a similar instrument for application to my own case, they sent it to an eminent barrister of the High Court for opinion. The lawyer having given his opinion that, under that document, an excommunication might safely take place, a meeting of the caste was called at the bungalow of Sheth Gopaldas Madhowdas in Kandewady.

The meeting was held, and there we were condemned unheard. The trial took place, after a fashion, but the persons who were on their trial and were deeply affected by its issue, were not allowed an opportunity to make their defence. No intimation of the meeting had been sent to us. Nay, Purdesee sepoys had been posted at the doors with instructions not to let us enter the building, should we come there and demand admission. The proceedings, so far as we were concerned, were held in the dark, as if the movers were inwardly conscious of some wrong. We did not come to know of the proceedings until the following day, when we discovered that we had been formally banished from the caste under a covenant signed by many of those who were present at the meeting. We knew nothing about the nature or contents of the covenant, as, indeed, we knew nothing whatever about the trial, except what we could gather after it had been held behind our backs. The whole procedure was gone through in the dark, for darkness, not light, suited the purpose of our opponents. To this day, the Shethias have kept the document to themselves. But after the lapse of eighteen years, I was enabled to procure a copy of the agreement. It is in Gujerati, and is to the following effect :—

"A meeting of the Kapole Banya caste was held in the *wady* of Sheth Gopaldas Madhowdas, on Vaisakh Vad. 10,

Samwat 1927, (Sunday, the 14th May 1871). Whereas a Kapole Banya, named Madhowdas Rugnathdas, married a woman of the same caste, named Dhunkorebai, daughter of the late Girdhardas Mohundas, and widow of Lukhmidas Dhurumsey, in Samwat 1927, Vaisakh Sud 13, *i.e.* Tuesday the 2nd May 1871. The following resolutions were unanimously carried at a meeting of the caste held to consider the subject :—

1. That as the custom of widow re-marriage is not in our caste, and as such re-marriage is contrary to the immemorial practice of our caste, and is opposed to what we conscientiously believe to be the law enjoined by our religious Shastras, the said Madhowdas Rugnathdas having married the said widow Dhunkorebai, they have rendered themselves ineligible for such social intercourse as that of eating and drinking* with the caste, and of giving and receiving in marriage. Therefore, no member of the caste shall hold such intercourse with them.

2. That if any member of the Kapole caste will eat or drink with the said Madhowdas Rugnathdas or Bai Dhunkore, or hold such intercourse with them as that of giving and receiving in marriage, such member shall render himself equally ineligible for holding such intercourse with the caste, and no such intercourse shall be held with him.

3. That if it be proved hereafter that any member or members of our caste had aided, or taken part in, the re-marriage of Madhowdas Rugnathdas with Dhunkorebai, the caste shall not hold with such member or members any such intercourse as is stated above.

That the above resolutions were passed this day by the Kapole caste in meeting assembled, and that they were agreed to by all."

*Water, of course.

CHAPTER X.

——:o:——

Piecrust Promises.

At the foot of this agrement, the first signature is that of Tribhowandas Vurjeewandas, son of Vurjeewandas Madhowdas. Then follows a number of other signatures. Several of my caste-men present at the meeting had gone away without signing the document. Signatures of more members of the caste were subsequently taken, but Sir Munguldas Nathoobhoy did not sign the document. There were various reasons for his not signing it. He passed for a man of reformed views. He was at that time a member of the Bombay Legislative Council, and he would not have signed the paper, even if he had wished to do so, from fear of adverse criticism in the English press. Again, his signing it might have been construed into a recognition on his part of Gopaldas, one of the principal conveners of the meeting, as the head of the caste. At the same time, he did not, perhaps, like that he should occupy the invidious position of being the only prominent Kapole, who in this matter was out of touch with the rest of his community.

Sir Munguldas had his own game to play. He told Sheth Lukhmidas Khimjee and Dr. Byramjee Nowrojee that I should proceed against Sheth Gopaldas and his brothers and henchmen for defamation; because if I were to sit quiet over

the steps they had already taken against me, they were, in course of time, sure to do me more harm. In proof of this, he said that my opponents had, besides the agreement which had been submitted to their caste for signature, held consultations in secret among themselves, with the view of doing me the utmost possible injury, that they had either entered, or were about to enter, into a secret agreement, providing that no member of the caste should either call at my house, or speak to me, or even so much as touch me, that none should come to my house on the occurrence of a death in my family, that no communication or intercourse whatever of any kind should be held with me, and that, in short, I and my wife should be taken for dead. He said that such was their plan of operations against me, and that it was to my interests that I should take prompt measures against it. He offered to give me secretly assistance in any action I might take against them.

Sheth Lukhmidas came to me with Mr. Bhaishankar Nanabhoy (solicitor), and communicated to me all that Sir Munguldas had told him. Dr. Byramjee also saw me and gave me advice that something must be done at once to frustrate the hostile movement. Mr. Bhaishankar said the document must, in the first place, be seized by an attachment. I told them that all that had been stated by Sir Munguldas might be very true; but I asked how it could be proved in a court of law. No member of the caste, if he wanted to remain in the caste, would dare to give evidence against the Shathias, and without witnesses, nothing of course, could be done. Lukhmidas said that Munguldas would procure witnesses for me; and on that assurance, I obtained, through my solicitors, Messrs. Jafferson and Payne, sum-

monses for defamation against Gopaldas Madhowdas and Purshotumdas Mohundas. As soon as the summonses were served upon these persons, the agreement which was being sent round for signature was at once withdrawn from circulation and no more signatures were taken to it. Thus far, Sir Munguldas had succeeded in his object. Sheth Gopaldas was in great alarm at the prospect of going to the Police Court to defend his conduct, and he solicited the aid and advice of Mr. Sorabjee Bengalee. Mr. Sorabjee saw me and said it would not be possible for me to substantiate the charges which I had preferred, that if I had moved in the matter at the instigation of Sir Munguldas, I might be pretty sure that he would desert me, at the last moment. I assured Mr. Sorabjee that if Sir Munguldas would leave me in the lurch, as he supposed he would, I would not proceed with the case and would come to whatever settlement he (Mr. Sorabjee) might advise me to.

The case was called before the late Mr. Connon in the Fort Police Court. The late Mr. Anstey, a distinguished member of the Bombay bar, who appeared on my behalf, opened the case in a learned and impressive speech which lasted for two hours, and was listened to with breathless interest by the large crowd of spectators who were present. After the opening address, the case was adjourned, and we had now to find witnesses for the next hearing. Sheth Luckhmidas went to Sir Munguldas and asked him to fulfil his promise about procuring witnesses for us. But he now backed out of the affair altogether. He pleaded that it was impossible for him to get witnesses for us, saying that partisans of Vurjeewandas and Gopaldas were trying to turn the caste people against him, that they were spread

ing a report that he was at the bottom of the widow remarriage as well as of the present case, and that if, under these circumstances, he were to take any part whatever in the case, or give any sort of assistance to me, his enemies might try to put him out of caste. Sir Munguldas not only refused point blank to carry out the promise, on the strength of which I had instituted the proceedings, but coolly told Sheth Lukhmidas not to visit him at his bungalow for some time to come. Sheth Lukhmidas very naturally felt very sore at the backsliding of Sheth Munguldas, and when he spoke to me of the complete change of front exhibited by that gentleman, I was naturally very much put out. I had my suspicions from the beginning that Sir Munguldas was a broken reed to rely upon, and had expressed my fears to Mr. Lukhmidas when he first communicated to me the promises of support voluntarily offered by him. I was somewhat angry with my friend for persuading me to believe in the assurances of aid which had come from that quarter. Mr. Lukhmidas said he was ready to swear to what Sheth Munguldas had told him, when he suggested that I should take legal proceedings. I did not think such evidence, even if it were admissible, would be of any avail. In the meanwhile, Mr. Sorabjee Bengalee pressed me, on behalf of the defendants, to withdraw the charge. I complied with his request, and the charge was withdrawn.

Although the proceedings thus came to nought, the action which I had taken did me some good. It produced in Sheth Gopaldas a wholesome fright, and I am glad to record here that he never more did anything against me, during the sixteen years that he lived since the institution of the proceedings in the Police Court. When-

ever any of our caste-men went to him and suggested to him anything about me, he used to tell them distinctly never more to speak to him on the subject, saying that he could do nothing, and that people might now do what they liked. In fact, he retired gradually from all sorts of caste squabbles and disputes, and eventually withdrew from its leadership, which was subsequently assumed by Tribhowandas Vurjeewandas. Sheth Gopaldas passed the rest of his life in peace and retirement. He was a man of courage, and a man of his word. If he made a promise, it was a point of honour with him to keep it. This Sheth had some very commendable qualities in him, and I had always a very high opinion of him.

CHAPTER XI.

—— : o : ——

Irreparable Loss.—Caste Vengeance and Caste Moralizings.

The Vurjeewandas people were not satisfied by simply putting me out of caste, according to the writing above mentioned. They have never missed a single opportunity of molesting me, ever since I contracted this marriage, so odious in their eyes. It is my happy fortune that I live under the protection of the British Government, otherwise I am sure that my enemies would have made it impossible for me to live and carry on my business in Bombay. All they could do in secret and with impunity they have not left undone. Soon after my excommunication, they interdicted the Brahmins of our caste, who are known as Kandolia Brahmins, from performing any religious ceremonies in my house. They also arranged that no Thakordwari Brahmins, who are called in by us, when required, as cooks, should go to our house for the purpose of cooking. These same Shethias are, no doubt, glad that during all these eighteen years, my wife and her mother have never once seen each other's face, nor have the brother and sister ever met each other. Dhunkore is as dead to them ; so they will die without seeing her ! Can human folly reach greater depths ? Was ever custom more inhuman, more unnatural ?

In all our troubles and sufferings the friendship and support of our dear friend, Cursondas Muljee, was invaluable. With this good man and true by our side, we felt, as if we could suffer all and brave all. But shortly after his return to Limri, he was attacked with dysentery and piles, to which he succumbed, after four months' illness. This was a most painful event, situated as we were at the time. We well nigh sank under the terrible blow which it had pleased God to inflict on us. We were unnerved and my wife wept bitterly over the loss we had sustained. Our loss was irreparable, our grief was boundless. Our prop, our main-stay, was removed from under us. We had high hopes in him. We were te live together with our families in Bombay, on the expiration of his period of service in the state of Limri. My infant daughter by my former wife, a poor innocent child but three years old, she too had virtually been excommunicated with her father by the unrelenting tyranny of caste, and it was in our mind to marry her, at the proper time, to one of Mr. Cursondas's sons. The family of my friend had also been put out of caste, because Mr. Cursondas had crossed the black waters to go over to the country of unclean *Malechs* and *Asuras*, as the natives of England are regarded by Shethias. A voyage to Europe is one of the direst offences in their catalogue of crimes, even as great as that of marrying a widow. So both the families we being similarly situated, would have been a support and a comfort to each other, and, together, we would have felt as if we could defy the world. Now all our hopes were gone, and my wife and I were for a time in blank despair. Mr. Sorabjee Bengalee, a gentleman of a kind and benevolent spirit, came to us and did much to comfort us. We had no

help but to resign ourselves to the the will of God and to pray to him for strength and courage to walk alone in this world of wickedness.

How many crimes have been committed in the name of God and religion! Cursondas Mulji was excommunicated for the crime of visiting the land of *Malechs* and *Asuras*; and his wife and little children were also excommunicated for no crime that I know, except, perhaps, that of being his wife and children. He was now dead; but the vengeance of his caste-men still pursued those who had been near and dear to him. The Shethias decreed that his innocent wife and children must undergo the purgation of a *Prayaschit*. Their bodies and souls, fouled by contact and association with a sinner, must be cleansed, before they could be taken back into the caste. They must go on a pilgrimage of penance to Nasik; they must swallow the not very savoury pills made up of some of the products of the cow; they must rub cow's filth all over their body and then wash away their sins in the holy river of Nasik, rendered so turbid by the filth and sins of tens of thousands of successive generations of pilgrims. All these expiatory rites were duly performed by the poor victims of caste. Nay more; the hair on the heads of the children was shaved off; and thus washed, and drugged, and clean shaven, and purified, they were restored once more by the Shethias to the rights and privileges of the caste. The terrible example made of this widowed family has had the effect desired by the Shethias. No member of our caste has since gone to Europe.

In May 1872, exactly a year after my remarriage, I was stricken down with a very malignant type of fever. I re-

mained unconscious for days, and I was pronounced to be in a very critical state. On the advice of my doctor, my wife and friends removed me to Mahaluxmi for change. My life was in great danger, but the change revived me very soon, and after some weeks, I was well enough to be able to resume my usual work. The reports of my dangerous illness "were glad tidings of great joy" to many of my caste people, and on my removal to Mahaluxmi they spread rumours about my death and the disposal of my body. They spread a report that as nobody could be found to remove my corpse, my friends got *Bawas and Bairagis* from Bholeshwar to do that work, on payment of Rs. 5 to each of them; that my friends could, with very great difficulty and after many entreaties, overcome the objection of the trustees of Sheth Jugonnath Sunkershet to allow my body to be disposed of at the burning ground in their charge. Their imagination also invented my will. They said that I was worth only Rs. 20,000, out of which I had given Rs. 10,000 to my wife, Rs. 5,000 to my daughter, and Rs. 5,000 towards a widow remarriage fund. The wish was father to the thought; and so it happened that they killed me, burnt me and disposed of my property, while I was making sure, and not very slow, progress towards recovery at Mahaluxmi.

Not a few people were misled by these rumours. Those who were opposed to widow remarriage moralized over my end, over the difficulties which my friends had to encounter in procuring a decent burning for my vile carcase, and over the second widowhood of my wife which was sure to entail upon her greater miseries than what she had to endure before. They were sure that God had visited us with this punishment for our disobedience to His Supreme Will.

There were many others, I am happy to say, who were really very sorry to hear of my death. They came to my house, and learnt with pleasure from neighbours that I was not dead, but that I had been removed to Mahaluxmi, where I was doing well. While the majority of my caste was against us, it was a great comfort to me and my wife that we were not without many good friends and sympathisers. God, in His mercy, spared my life, and I am deeply thankful to Him. For what would otherwise have been the fate of my poor wife and child !

CHAPTER XII.

——: o :——

A Widow's Adventures.

Three months after my recovery, there occured an event which again put the Kapole community into a ferment of excitement. A widow of our caste at Bhownagar was *enceinte.* She knew that a widow found in a similar condition had once been killed by her outraged caste-men, and she feared that if her own condition came to be discovered by her relatives, she, too, would be similarly put out of the way. The woman confided her secret to a certain person, and ran away with him to Bombay. They lived here together in a room at Doongri. On her caste people and kinsfolk discovering the woman's whereabouts, they sent four men to bring her back. They went into the room, and administered such sound beating to the woman's mate that he ran away for life. They then seized hold of the woman, and placing her in a bullock *rekla,* took her into a chawl in Kansàrà Bazar, where she was given over in charge of a native midwife. Here the widow had to submit to compulsory abortion, and then she was hurriedly packed off to Bhownagar.

The man who had been beaten out of his home by the kidnappers came to me, and acquainted me with all the circumstances of the case. He expressed his fear that the woman would be murdered by some means, and therefore, he said, that not a moment should be lost to get her back.

I accordingly gave information to the Commissioner of Police who ordered the four persons, who had been charged with kidnapping, into his presence. They all denied the charge, and had to be let off for want of sufficient evidence to convict them.

Nor could any trace be found of the widow. She had been deported to Bhownagar, and to elude the vigilance of the police, she had been removed to a remote and obscure village in the state. Here she was daily subjected to the cruel taunts and harsh treatment of those around her. She was pointed at by everybody as an object of scorn and hatred. She could not stir out or show her face to anybody. Her life grew to be an insupportable burden to her, and in a letter which she contrived to send to her companion in Bombay she piteously begged of him to come to her and take her back, adding that she had determined to commit suicide, if he did not come up within a fortnight. The man brought the letter to me, and I thought of doing something to save the woman. He had no means to go to her; nor had he courage enough to undertake the journey alone. Before taking any action, however, I showed the letter to Mr. Sorabjee Bengalee, Mr. Kaikhoshru Kabrajee, and Dr. Atmaram Pandurung, and they were all agreed that immediate steps should be taken to bring back the woman. I accordingly sent out the man, with Mathuradas Khersey and one or two other persons, including a Cabulee Pathan, giving them a sum of money to defray their expenses on the road. When they reached the village, from whence the widow had written the letter, they found that she had been marched off to some other village. The exploring party instituted a very careful search for the woman in many villages, but in vain.

At last, they despaired of finding her, and were about to return to Bombay, when they heard by chance from a cartman that she was in a village near Dhollera. They went there, and with very great difficulty brought her safe to Bombay. Now I asked the woman what she wanted to do, and she replied that she was willing to marry the person who had originally brought her down from Bhownagar. As they were both willing, I got them married. The couple is now in Surat, where they live very respectably, and I still hear from them occasionally.

This was the first widow-remarriage, since my own, which I assisted at. There have since been from fifty to sixty such unions among Banyas, Bhattias, and Brahmins, both Dakshani and Gujerati, and out of these marriages some twenty have been celebrated under my own auspices.

There is one very remarkable fact about these marriages. In very few cases, indeed, did the bride-grooms belong to what are known as the educated classes. The latter have confined themselves to making speeches in paise of widow-remarriage, but they have done nothing, dared nothing. They are sadly lacking in the courage necessary to brave the consequences of excommunication. If they were to defy the tyranny of caste in any numbers, they can of themselves form a caste strong enough to live in comfort and happy association within their own circle. But they hold back with fear. Who will dare? Who will sacrifice? And thus it is that the examples of daring and social sacrifice involved in widow remarriage are given, not by those from whom they might be naturally expected, but by uneducated men, men of what are called old ideas, men who have staunch faith in their religion.

CHAPTER XIII.

—— : o : ——

Social Ill-usage.—A Few Facts.

The real opponents of widow-remarriage are not generally the simple and poor members of a caste, but its Shetthias. They pose before the public as the most enlightened members of their caste. In their conversation with European or Parsi acquaintances, they declare themselves to be ardent advocates of social reform, and they pretend to deplore the folly, the stupidity and the ignorance of their caste-fellows. But as a matter of fact, it is these same Shethias, these leading citizens, these enlightened members of society, who are really the bitterest and most uncompromising enemies of social progress. It is these same men who are up in arms against any one who has dared do what they have always professed before outsiders to be a most excellent thing to do. It is these same people who really move the caste, and the poor members of the caste, born and bred in the traditions of implicit obedience to their Shethias, do as they are bidden. If the Shethias were sincere in their professions of reform, their influence with their pliant and docile following can be as powerful for good as it is at present powerful only for evil. I know from bitter experience that the persons who have for the last eighteen years never ceased to annoy me and intrigue against me are some of these very Shethias; and in support of my assertion, I shall give here a few instances.

Boycotting.

Dr. Byramjee Nowrojee was the family doctor of Sheth Vurjeewandas. He also knew me very well, and, therefore, on the occasion of his daughter's marriage, he came with his wife to my house to invite me and my wife to the wedding. They then went to the house of Sheth Vurjeewandas, and as Vurjeewandas knew that Dr. Byramjee was well acquainted with me, he asked the doctor whether he had invited me and my wife, observing that if that was the case, he would not send any ladies of his family to the wedding. Though I was excommunicated, there was nothing to prevent my caste-men associating with me at social parties where we were not to eat together. But Sheth Vurjeewandas was not to be satisfied with the usual penalties of excommunication. In reply to his inquiry, Dr. Byramjee said he had invited me and my wife, but that it was not certain whether we would attend the wedding. Dr. Byramjee then came again to me and asked if we were sure to come. I wanted to know why he asked such a curious question, and he plainly told me the reason. I, ofcourse, was much offended, and told the doctor that, under the circumstances, we did not ourselves care to attend the wedding.

Hurjeewandas Jugjeewandas, a relative of my wife, used to visit me at my house. His father, while on his death bed, had requested me to take care of his son. Vurjeewandas threatened him in various ways. He said that if he persisted in going to my house, no one in the caste would give him a girl to marry and he would die a miserable death. In the same way, my nephew, who is the son-in-law of Vurjeewandas, was also told by him not to go to my house.

A Friendly Warning.

I had pecuniary dealings with Mr. Sorabjee Bengalee. On his partner, Mr. Vurjeewandas, coming to know of the matter, he warned Mr. Sorabjee to be very careful in his dealings with me, saying that my affairs were not in a sound condition, and that he might, therefore, come some day to grief. Mr. Sorabjee replied that he did not think my position was unsound, and that in any case his money dealings with me were not very large. If the object of Sheth Vurjeewandas was to do me some injury in my business, it was not obtained.

A Lawyer's Notice.

A wealthy Porwal Banya, named Gangadas Vijbhookhandass, celebrated the marriage of his sons with some pomp and splendour at Madhowbaugh, which was built by the family of Sheth Vurjeewandas. Gungadas had erected in the compound a costly *mandap*, and had invited his friends, and acquaintances to a *nautch* party. Myself being one of the invited guests, I attended the party, and was very cordially received by the host. Sheth Vurjeewandas was there sitting on a sofa, and by his side was a Bhattia, who had been transported for life, but whose sentence had been mercifully remitted by Government after he had served his term for ten years. Both these gentlemen were sitting side by side, engaged in conversation. But Sheth Vurjeewandas could not tolerate my presence at the gathering. I was a great criminal who must be banished from all human society, cut off from all human intercourse. He was deeply offended by my hateful presence, but he kept his wrath to himself while I was there, and continued chatting with that

Bhattia gentleman. After sitting there for some time I left, the host having again greeted me with much cordiality. After I had gone, Vurjeewandas and some other members of his family ordered Gangadas to take down the *mandap* and vacate the premises at once, for having insulted them by inviting me to the party. Gangadas was much frightened by this threat. It was yet some days for the marriage to be celebrated, and if he were made to leave the place, bag and baggage, that very day, his whole programme of festivities would be upset, and he would be put to a great deal of trouble and inconvenience. He considered it best to surrender at mercy. He said, "what is done, is done. Now I am ready to do whatever you may want me to do." Thereupon, the Vurjeewandas people directed that Gangadas should send a lawyer's notice to me, stating that I was not again to attend any of the parties to be given by Gangadas. A gentleman came to me in the morning and informed me of what had happened over-night, so I was not taken by surprise, when a Prabhu clerk belonging to the firm of Messrs. Cleveland and Peel, solicitors, came to me that day with a notice. I was informed in that notice that many of the gentlemen present at the party on the previous night had been surprised to see me there, that although I might have received a card of invitation from some one of the several managers of Gangadas Vijbhookhandas, I was to take notice that if I had similarly received cards to attend any other parties that were to take place hereafter, they had been hereby cancelled. I was given to understand by the solicitors that the cards had not been issued to me with the knowledge or consent of their client.

I was naturally much offended on reading this notice. I went to a lawyer for advice, and sent a reply to the notice in

these terms :—That I had attended the *nautch* party, as I had received an invitation card bearing the name of Gangadas Vijbhookhandas ; that I had gone thither, believing that Gangadas would feel himself slighted, if I did not attend ; that the step which he had subsequently taken at the instigation of interested parties was opposed to the conduct of a gentleman ; and that he must rest assured that, even if I were ever to receive in future any number of invitations however pressing, from him, I would never condescend to accept them, as his conduct to me had been so ungentlemanly.

An Appeal to Government.

Time did not allay the animosity which the Vurjeewandas people bore towards me. When Sir Richard Temple, resigning the Governorship of Bombay, went to England to take part in the Parliamentary elections, the Hon. Mr. Ashburner was Acting Governor. During his tenure of this office, he held two evening parties at Government House, to which my wife and I had been invited. On receiving the first invitation, I went to consult my friends Mr. Kabrajee and Dr. Atmaram as to whether I should go there or not. They both strongly recommended me to go, and as we had never before been to a Government House party, Mr. Kabrajee who, too, had been invited to the party, offered to accompany us. So we went together, and my wife and I were introduced by Mr. Kabrajee to Mr. Ashburner. Mr. Bengalee also introduced us to several of the ladies and gentlemen present. The honour I had received was too much for Vurjeewandas & Co., and they tried to stop our future invitations to attend Government House parties. They told the Hon. Morarjee Goculdas that the presence of

excommunicated persons at these parties was calculated to diminish the value which was attached to them, and that, therefore, he should endeavour with Sir Munguldas to get our names removed from the list of guests. Mr. Morarjee undertook to do this, and happening one evening to see Sir Munguldas at the Chowpatti sea-shore, he said to him that Mr. Ashburner had not been well advised in inviting such persons to the party and he asked Sir Munguldas to go with him to Mr. Ashburner and make a complaint. Sir Munguldas declined to accompany him, saying that as Mr. Morarjee himself knew Mr. Ashburner well enough, he might see him himself, if he had any complaint to make.

Mr. Morarjee, thereupon, went alone to see Mr. Ashburner, and told him that many respectable gentlemen had been displeased with the presence of the excommunicated persons at Government House parties. Mr. Ashburner replied that he did not like that Hindoo Shethias should come there, leaving ladies of their own families at home, and mingle with European ladies; that he had, accordingly, expressed a wish that a few respectable Hindoos, who had no objection to bring their ladies with them, should also be invited, and that an invitation had been sent to Mr. and Mrs. Madhowdas, in accordance with that wish. He added that he did not personally know whether they were proper persons to be invited to these parties or not, nor did he know why they had been put out of caste. But he said he would make inquiries and then do what he thought proper.

When I heard of what had passed between Munguldas and Morarjee, I became alarmed. I had received the honour of an invitation without having ever tried for it. I did not make up my mind to go, until I had consulted my friends

about it; and I thought that if the invitation were now discontinued, I might suffer in the estimation of my community, and the party of Vurjeewandas would be jubilant over the triumph they would have obtained over me. I went to Dr. Atmaram for advice. He allayed my fears, and went at once to see Mr. Ashburner and acquainted him with all the facts of the case. Mr. Ashburner asked Dr. Atmaram whether the party had been successful, and the latter replied that it had been a perfect success. He then asked whether there had been any cause for complaint. Dr. Atmaram inquired whether any complaint had been received, whereupon Mr. Ashburner said that Mr. Morarjee had been complaining to him that a couple, who had been excommunicated from their caste, had been invited to the party. Dr. Atmaram said it was true that Mr. Madhowdas and his wife had been excommunicated, but they had suffered the punishment for an act which was most honourable to them, and not for anything which any man in the world might be ashamed of. He added that Mr. Madhowdas was a respectable citizen and a merchant having large dealings. It would not have mattered, if he had never been invited; but having once been invited, it would be unfair to him to have his invitation discontinued without any good reason. Dr. Atmaram hoped that Mr. Ashburner would not allow himself to be unconsciously influenced by the envious misrepresentations of persons who bore no good will to Madhowdas. Mr. Ashburner assured Dr. Atmaram that he would not allow any injustice to be done to his friend.

I also went to Mr. Kabrajee, who at once wrote a letter to Mr. Ashburner, warning him against the attempt which had probably been made by my enemies to mislead him, assuring

him that I was a respectable citizen and merchant, and that I had been excommunicated for a most honourable deed, having been the first among Gujerati Hindoos to marry a widow. Mr. Kabrajee added that if my invitation were now discontinued, he would take it as an insult to himself, for it was he who had introduced me to Mr. Ashburner, and he had not introduced to him a worthless individual, but a gentleman.

Mr. Ashburner, replying to Mr. Kabrajee's note, said that he had been perfectly satisfied with the explanation, and that he saw no reason whatever to discontinue the invitation of his friend.

Ever since that time, I have been asked to all the Government House parties to which natives are invited, and I take this opportunity to thank our just and impartial Government for thus giving a sort of recognition to widow remarriage.

A Happy Event.

I have said that I had a daughter by my former wife, who was three years old, at the time of my remarriage. As she grew up, my anxiety to see her married also increased. I knew that none of my caste-men would venture to oppose the will and tyranny of our Shethias by marrying my daughter. "Now, let us see who is going to marry that fellow's daughter!" said some of these gentry with an air of triumph. "Her father will have to look for a son-in-law from among the Parsis, Europeans, or Mahomedans. But he won't find any one even from these communities to marry his daughter."

By the grace of God, my ill-wishers were once more doomed to disappointment. A young man of my own caste, belonging to a very respectable family which, however, had been reduced to poverty, came and lived with me under my

protection. Both his parents had been dead, and he had no means of support from any quarter. He was an intellgent lad and was very anxious to study. He had passed his Matriculation Examination in the first attempt. The boy was at that time 19 years of age and my daughter was 16. In answer to my question, they both signified their perfect willingness to be united in marriage. I settled a sum of Rs. 7,000 in trust upon my daughter, and celebrated the happy marriage. All my friends were present at the wedding, but none of my caste-men were there. If any had attended the marriage, I doubt not but that they would have been either excommunicated or otherwise annoyed, by our Shethias. There was, however, a goodly gathering of Banyas of other castes. I had invited to the wedding all the Gujerati Hindoos who had contracted widow remarriage since my own, and a number of them had come from Gujerat and Kattyawar to take part in the marriage festivities. I scarcely felt, therefore, that I was not among my own people. The marriage has been one of the happiest events of my life. My son-in-law who, after he had passed his University Entrance Examination, had joined the Grant Medical College, passed out as a doctor this year.

Miss E. A. Manning in Bombay.

In more recent times, there occured an event, when the hostility of my enemies broke forth afresh. Miss E. A. Manning, a philanthropic lady, who has devoted herself to the bettering of the social condition of India, and who is an ardent and untiring advocate of female education, came out to India in the cold weather of the year 1888. Indians are deeply grateful to this good lady for her disinterested efforts

in their behalf, and they welcomed her most joyfully in their midst. I, too, was exceedingly glad of her visit to our country, and looked forward with eagerness to the day, when I should have the happiness of seeing her and bearing my greetings to her. On arrival in Bombay, she stayed with Mr. Justice Scott, a gentleman distinguished for his intelligent sympathy for our people, and Mrs. Scott who has endeared herself to natives by her kindliness of heart and her desire for the spread of education among Indian woman. The host and hostess were, no doubt, quite after the heart of Miss Manning, for they were in cordial sympathy with the noble object and labours of her life.

It was arranged to hold an evening party in honour of the distinguished visitor. A committee was formed and it was resolved to hold the entertainment at the bungalow of Sheth Vurjeewandas Madhowdas at Mahaluxmi. Contracts were given out for the lighting and decoration of the bungalow and grounds; a day was fixed for the party and announced in the papers. While preparations for Miss Manning's reception were actively proceeding, a meeting of the Committee was held at Mr. Justice Scott's bungalow, and some more names were added to the Committee. A member proposed my name, and it was accepted by everybody, except Mr. Harkisondas Narotamdas, a nephew of Sheth Vurjeewandas. He said that he and his uncle had their own objections to my name being included in the Committee. Being asked by Mr. Scott what those objections were, he replied that they were of a private nature. Mr. N. G. Chandawarkar, a Hindoo gentleman possessing much genuine enthusiasm for reform, and Mr. Kabrajee contended that the personal or private objections of an individual could have

nothing whatever to do with a public function. Mr. Harkisondas had nothing to say to this argument, and he tried to cut it short by saying that if I were made a member of the Reception Committee, his uncle's bungalow of Westfield Park would not be available for the entertainment.

The ultimatum thrown out by Harkisondas took the Committee by surprise. All the arrangements having far advanced, it would not do to go in search of another place for the reception. At the same time, it was shocking to their sense of fairness that a man who, they thought, was fit in every way to serve on the Committee should be excluded altogether from the reception, on account of the private grudge of one or two individuals. They believed that Miss Manning would very much prefer to see one who was a real lover of reform, and who had shown his love for it in practice, rather than see a hundred men, who simply put on a show and semblance of reform before Englishmen and other non-Hindoos, but who were really the bitterest and most uncompromising enemies of reform. But if Hurkisondas had strong personal objection to my taking any part in the reception, how very much stronger objection,—so the Committee thought,—I must naturally have to my going to his house? And they were perfectly right in so thinking. Harkisondas's objection was, however, overruled, my name was placed on the Committee, and an intimation to that effect was sent to me by Mr. Justice Scott. I remained on the Committee, but, of course, I never went to the place of the entertainment.

My friends were much annoyed at the conduct of Mr. Harkisondas. Dr. Atmaram Pandurung and Mr. Vaman Abajee Modak, Principal of the Elphinstone High School, on hearing of it, wrote to the Secretary to strike off their names

from the Committee, saying that they did not like to take part in an entertainment from which I had been practically excluded. Some of my other friends were also going to write to the same effect. But I dissuaded them from their purpose, saying that it would not be well, in consequence of the wrong-headedness of one or two individuals, to mar the success of a party held in honour of one whom they all liked so much to honour. When Miss Manning came subsequently to hear of the objection which had been raised to my coming to the party, she became very sorry, and said that if she had known of it beforehand, she would have refused to be entertained at Westfield Park.

"If my opponents thought that my non-attendance at the party was a triumph achieved over me, it was a most sorry triumph. They could not but have suffered in the estimation of Miss Manning and all other genuine and honest persons. To gain their private end, they allowed themselves to be found out. The party came off, and it was an undoubted success. But there were, among those who attended it, many who must have been struck with the painful anomaly that a true and genuine advocate of social reform was honoured under the roof of some of the staunchest opponents of progress.

Some of my friends suggested that I should myself invite Miss Manning to an evening party. I willingly took up the suggestion, and Miss Manning accepted my invitation with great pleasure. I have to thank my friends, Messrs. N. G. Chandavarkar, Darashaw R. Chijgar, and K. N. Kabrajee, for their aid in making all the arrangements for the party. The papers unanimously pronounced it to be a success, and I

append here the account which appeared in the *Bombay Gazettee*:—

"Among the many pleasant reminiscences of her sojourn in Bomay which Miss Manning will carry away with her, not the least happy will be the evening party held in her honour on Wednesday by Mr. and Mrs. Madhowdas Rugnathdas at their house in Girgaon, called the Widow Re-marriage Hall. Mr. Madhowdas is a genuine social reformer, who has greater faith in the virtue of acts than of smooth speech. He is the first among Gujerati Hindoos who had the courage to marry a widow in Bombay, at a time when the prejudice against such alliances was very much stronger than it is now. Ever since that occasion, his house has always been open, as a house of refuge, to helpless widows seeking protection from the vengeance and persecution of their relatives and caste-people, with the intention of contracting a re-marriage. Many such happy unions have been performed at the hause of Mr. Madhowdas, who has, up to now, spent about Rs. 7,000 on the celebrations, and every year these marriages are witnessed by an ever-increasing circle of friends and sympathisers. While Mr. Madhowdas has in his own unostentations way, done a great deal by his personal example and support to promote the cause which he has at heart, it can not be forgotten in any remarks upon this subject that the honour of starting the movement on this side of India belongs to Vishnoo Shastri, a Marathi Hindoo who kept up an active agitation on the subject, and who, when he himself lost his wife, showed that he was capable of acting up to his own convictions by marrying a widow. Vishnoo Shastri had officiated at the re-marriage of Mr. Madhowdas, and many Marathi Hiddoos

have, since his marriage with a widow, followed his example. On the present occasion, the house and grounds were very tastefully illuminated, and Miss Manning was delighted to meet a number of happy wives who had once been widows. The guest of the evening was received at the entrance by the hosts who led her upstairs and introduced to her several of the native ladies present. A few Parsi and Hindoo ladies sang a sweet little song, to the accompaniment of a piano, which was presided over by Miss Jerbanoo K. N. Kabrajee; and another young lady, Miss Manijeh Hormusjee Chijgar, also gave a performance on the piano, which was very much admired for the skilful rendering of a difficult piece of music. The company included Mr. Justice Scott and Mrs. Scott, Mr. Justice Jardine, Mrs. Ashburner, Mr. H. Curwen; Mr. J. Griffiths, the Hon. K. T. Telang, Rev. Dr. Mackichan, Dr. Ramcrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, Dr. Arnott, Dr. Miss Edith Peechy, Rukhmabai, Messrs. P. Ryan, Hamilton, K. N. Kabrajee, Darasha R. Chijgar, Vaman Abajee Modak, Yeshwant M. Kelkar, (Oriental Translator to Government), Hormusjee M. Chijgar, Pandit Shyamjee Krishnavarma, Messrs. Desai, N. G. Chandravarkar, Gokuldas Kahandas, N. R. Ranina, Curreembhai Ibhrahim, Jugmohandas Mungaldas Nathoobhai, Davidas Pranjivandas, Narondas Pranjivandas, Drs. Atmaram Pandurang, Shantaram Vithal, and M. M. Bose, Rao Bahadoor Luxmonsinghjee, Rev. Dhanjeebhoy Nowrojee, Mr. Nanabhoy N. Master, and many others.

"Mr. Kabrajee, addressing Miss Manning, said the place was surrounded by many happy associations full of hope and promise in the future for the sacred cause to which it was dedicated, namely, the amelioration of the condition of that most unfortunate creature, the Hindoo widow. He

wished Mr. Madhowdas had asked some member of his own community to thank Miss Manning on his behalf. But the reason why he was selected for the honor was one for which he should ever be proud, namely, that he happened to be the only man now surviving among those who had taken part in the serious consultations which had taken place before the happy marriage of Mr. Madhowdas with his present wife was celebrated. Among those who assisted Mr. Madhowdas in carrying out his intention of marrying a widow was the late lamented Mr. Cursondas Muljee, the great hero of the Maharaj libel case, and an earnest and sincere reformer, the like of whom the Hindoo community would rarely see. (Hear hear.) The hall was called by the name of "The Widow Re-marriage Hall." The name was lately given to it, but its fame as an asylum for poor widows had long preceded its name. Mr. Madhowdas was not of the class of "talkative lip-reformers." He was an active worker in the cause of social reform, and he belived, with some of the friends present in the hall, that social reform must precede political reform, and that social reform was the foundation on which all political reform should be based. Mr. Madhowdas had since his own marriage assisted at so many other widow re-marriages in his own house, that it was a pleasure to recall some of them on that occasion, as it was a pleasure to see so many of them present that evening. Some of these alliances were associated with romantic episodes and adventures. The year after Mr. Madhowdas's own marriage, a widow wishing to re-marry came down with her intended husband from Bhownugger. They were entire strangers in Bombay, and, happening to inquire about Mr. Madhowdas's house, they unwarily let out the secret of their mission, and the

result was that they were actually kidnapped and deported from Bombay to their home in Kattywar. When the matter came to Mr. Madhowdas's knowledge, he took a great deal of active interest in it. The assistance of the police was sought. When it was found that the police were unable to do anything, an adventurous spirit belonging to the band of reformers who were actively exerting themselves on behalf of the kidnapped couple, went into the village where the widow had been taken, and she was brought back to Bombay, and the marriage was successfully celebrated. The same year witnessed another happy re-marriage of a widow. She and her intended husband were both employed as teachers in Broach. On their intention to marry getting abroad, the lady's caste people took her away into her village home, and there inflicted upon her all sorts of indignities. They got her head shaved, and tried to make her look as ugly as possible, so as to charm away the affection of the gentleman who wanted to marry her. But her husband was firm in his attachment; they contrived to come to Bombay, sought the shelter of Mr. Madhowdas's house, and were at last happily married. This was followed by a widow re-marriage in the Bhattia community. The widow with her young man came down to Bombay from Cutch, and so great was the excitement among their caste-people, that they were charged with divers criminal offences, their property was in danger of being confiscated, and they had to suffer numerous insults and indignities. But they overcame all their troubles, and were married in Bombay. Some time after Mr. Madhowdas's marriage, there occurred two instances of widow re-marriage in Ahmedabad, where the excitement had reached a point of frenzy. Mr. Madhowdas himself went to Ahmedabad in one of these cases, but

could find no Brahmin to perform the marriage ceremony. He, however, succeeded in overcoming the repugnance of the holy fraternity by a free distribution of money, and the result was that there was no lack of Brahmins to celebrate the nuptials. The other case was that of a Shrawak widow. The Shrawaks are a most orthodox sect even among the orthodox, and thousands of them laid seige to the lady's house, and the intended husband had to hide himself for the safety of his person. But through the intervention of the police, the bride was safely taken to the place of marriage, where the ceremony was successfully performed. Since Mr. Madowdas's marriage, there had been 21 such unions among the Gujerati Hindoos, together with five or six more of which no record was obtainable. The marriage of a vakil in Dhorajee, named Damodar, with a widow might be mentioned here. The event excited much indignation in his community. The couple were boycotted, and the Hindoos combined never to give any cases to the vakil. But the Mahomedans of the place came to his rescue by resolving to entrust their cases to none but him. On the other hand, Mr. Damodar announced his intention of serving Hindoo clients free of charge, and the result was that Hindoo litigants flocked to him; and he was now a very successful pleader. (Laughter.) The success which had attended Mr. Madowdas's efforts was partly due to his social position in Bombay, a position acquired by a combination of means and rank. Mr. Madhowdas belonged to one of the highest Banya families of this city, and his wife was a niece of Mr. Vurjeewandas Madhowdas, the head of another wealthy family. In thanking Miss Manning, Mr. Madhowdas hoped that her visit to Bombay might be the means of inducing his castepeople to

turn over a new leaf in regard to social matters. It was matter for congratulation that some of those who had been foremost in boycotting Hindoo widows were the very gentlemen who had signed the address of welcome to Miss Manning on her arrival. The address referred in warm terms to the efforts of Miss Manning in the cause of social progress, and therefore the signatures of those gentlemen to that document might be regarded as a new departure in their opinions. Mr Kabraji, on behalf of Mr. Madhowdas, then presented Miss Manning with photos of the couples who had performed widow re-marriage, and who were present in Bombay on the occasion of the marriage of Mr. Madhowdas's daughter.

" Miss Manning thanked Mr. and Mrs. Madhowdas, Mr. Kabraji, and other friends for the opportunity that was given her of attending a place where so many widow re-marriages had taken place. The subject had occupied the mind and engaged the interest of many friends in England. She was very much interested in the account of widow re-marriages given by Mr. Kabrajee. The persecution which had been undergone, and the courage and independence shown by those concerned would, she hoped, soon bear fruit, and in future widow re-marriages would be attended by fewer inconveniences. In England many of her friends were deeply interested in the widow re-marriage movement, and they earnestly hoped that the position of widows, which was certainly very much to be lamented, would soon begin to improve ; and that many such unions would take place. Miss Manning concluded by again thanking her friends for the kindness she had experienced at their hands, since she had come to this city. (Applause.)

The party then adjourned for refreshments, and dispersed

a short time afterwards, much pleased with the pleasant evening they had spent."

Miss Manning expressed herself greatly delighted with her reception, and published an account of the entertainment in the Journal of the *National Indian Association.*

It was very gratifying to me and my wife that a number of eminent ladies and gentlemen had accepted the invitation of a couple occupying a very ordinary station in life. It was still more gratifying that some of my own caste-men and women had not only joined the party, but had also assisted at it. This was gall and wormwood to my enemies. They were very wroth at the persons of my caste who had attended my house, and would have visited them with exemplary punishment, if they only could.

From Bombay Miss Manning went on a visit to some of the principal cities of India, and she was welcomed wherever she went. When she returned to this city, on her way home, I requested her to preside over the distribution of prizes to the pupils of a Government Girls' School at Karelwady, which is under the able management of a Parsi lady, Miss Veerbaiji Meheta. The meeting was held in the Framjee Cowasjee Institute, and a large gathering of Europeans and natives, of both sexes, had assembled in response to my invitation. The company included many more members of my caste than what had attended my evening party. Now the indignation of some of the Shethias knew no bounds. Their will and their authority had been set at defiance, and it was to them, no doubt, a painful thought that they were not sufficiently feared. One of my caste-men who had attended the meeting was my nephew, Mr. Gordhandas

Narsinghdas, who is a brother-in-law of Harkisondas Narotamdas. Vurjeewandas Sheth sent for him and told him that all the other members of my caste who had accepted my invitation had committed a grave offence, but that his offence had been of a most aggravating nature, and that he should attend the next caste meeting where they would sit in judgment upon his conduct. Gordhandas did not go to the meeting, and there, I suppose, the matter ended.

The Shethias' policy of terrorism did not succeed with everybody. Mr. Hurjeewandas Jugjeewandas, who is a son-in-law of Sir Munguldas, and a brother-in-law of Mr. Tribhowandas Vurjeewandas, joined my firm as assistant manager. Tribhowandas sent for Hurjeewandas and told him that, as a near relative of his, he had done very wrong in joining my firm, and that he should sever all his connection with me. Mr. Hurjeewandas firmly refused to do anything of the kind, whereupon Tribhowandas threatened him with caste persecution; but Mr. Hurjeewandas was not a man to be bullied into submission. Endeavours are being made to stop all caste invitations to him and thus virtually to excommunicate him.

My enemies were sorely grieved to find that their attempts to boycott me completely from my caste had failed. They were not satisfied with the usual penalties of excommunication. Nothing would have pleased them more than that every member of my caste should absolutely shun and despise me as their enemy, and have nothing whatever to do with me. Their policy now was to wreak their vengeance on those who did not object to have ordinary social intercourse with me.

Miserable Squabbles.

Harchand Premjee, a caste-man of ours, celebrated a few

months ago the marriage of his daughter. He had a son studying at the Grant Medical College, and he invited to a nautch party, held in honour of the wedding, the professors and students of the College, my son-in-law, Ranchordas, being one of the guests.

The same day I had been invited to take part in a marriage procession at the wedding of a son of Pranjeewandas Wagjee. Mr. Pranjeewandas is a brother-in-law of Sir Munguldas Nathoobhoy, and a very old friend of mine and Cursondas Muljee's. In response to the invitation I went to the procession, which was attended by Parsees, Europeans, Hindoos and Musulmans.

These two incidents threw Vurjeewandas and his son, Tribhowandas, into a passion of rage. They created a storm in the caste. They called some of their caste-fellows to their house, and held nightly consultations with them, which lasted at times till the small hours of the morning. It was represented to them that Pranjeewandas Wagjee and Harchand Premjee had committed a most grievous offence by inviting me and my son-in-law; that unless both of them repented of their sin and came to the caste as humble suppliants for forgiveness, all the caste feasts should be stopped, and no one should either go to the house of the two offenders to dine with them, or invite them to dinner at their own house. It was contemplated that after the two individuals had tendered an ample and sufficient apology to the caste, it should be resolved that no Kapole Banya should, thereafter, either go to my house or invite me or my son-in-law to his own, and that no intercourse whatever should be held with us by any member of the caste. So eighteen years after my

excommunication, they wanted to move the caste to inflict upon me additional pains and penalties !

Sir Munguldas and Sheth Vurjeewandas have long been at loggerheads with each other. They are rivals for the leadership of the caste. Each claims that he is the acknowledged head and leader of the caste, and each has a following of his own. Though enemies, on this occasion they combined, in order to serve a common object. Sir Munguldas hated Pranjeewandas, and Vurjeewandas hated me ; so the rival Sheths agreed to make common cause against us. Pranjeewandas was the husband of Sir Munguldas's sister ; but though they were so nearly related, Sir Munguldas, on account of some domestic jars, bore great illwill to his sister and her husband. I do not think Vurjeewandas would have moved the caste against Pranjeewandas with any hope of success, if he had not been sure of Sir Munguldas's support. The feud is of recent date, and is still progressing. Heaven knows when and how this most miserable squabble will end !

The Vurjeewandas people have raised this tempest, in pursuance of their policy of undying vengeance against me. Eighteen years after my excommunication, they have again clutched at an excuse to do me harm. There is nothing in the deed of excommunication to prevent any member of my caste from inviting me just to attend a festive party, like any Englishman, Parsi or Musulman. Yet they want Mr. Pranjeewandas and Mr. Harchand to apologize for no offence committed by them. They want, by an unjust exercise of their power, to coerce and terrify them into submission to a wrong, so that no Kapole might hereafter dare to hold any intercourse whatever with me.

Can no way be devised by British justice and British wisdom to make such persecution impossible? Can nothing prevent leaders of a caste making an unscrupulous use of caste as an instrument of torture and terror? The mass being timid, ignorant and unreasoning, Shethias are enabled to carry out their own designs under pretext of caste authority. Non-Hindoos know nothing of their bigotry and oppression. Before them these individuals put on their best smiles and most amiable manners. Before them they figure as patterns of benevolence and enlightenment, and deplore the stupidity and the wrongheadedness of caste in perpetuating the evils which they would sweep away, if they could have their own way. Their acting upon "the stage of life" is in melancholy contrast to their real nature. They are not what they seem, and it is their aim of life to seem what they are not.*

*Both Pranjeewandass Wagjee and Harchand Premjee have been compelled to tender an apology to the caste. Without being formally excommunicated, they found themselves practically debarred from the privileges of their caste. They held out for sometime; but were atlast terrified by the prospect of social illusage. And so they succumbed to the pressure brought upon them, and at a caste meeting they expressed their regret "for the deed which they had done." Nothing was said at the meeting as to what that deed was which had constituted an offence. Indeed, the attempt to convert an entirely harmless proceeding into a grave offence was so palpably wrong and unjust that it was evidently considered the best and the safest course to obtain an expression of regret in the vaguest terms possible."

CHAPTER XIV.

——: o :——

Stray Thoughts.

My experiences have taught me one lesson. It is that the Widow Re-marriage Act of 1856 is nothing more than a pronouncement of pious intentions. For all practical purposes, it has proved a dead-letter, and will remain so, unless the Legislature will introduce in it special clauses for the protection of the parties to a widow re-marriage from caste persecution. The unfortunate couple becomes, under existing circumstances, not only the victim of a formal excommunication by caste, but also of dark designs and secret plottings, and it is impossible to bring their authors to book. It will be in the fitness of things, if in the reign of our merciful Queen Victoria, who has at heart the welfare and social bettering of the condition of her woman kind in India, a law were passed that might lift the poor widows of this country out of their state of abject misery and degradation, and protect them effectually from inhuman persecution. I ask for no coercive legislation. But I say the time is ripe for a wise remedial measure. Every principle of justice and humanity calls for it. Dr. Hunter has suggested remedies in an excellent article in the *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, from which I take the following extract :—

"*First.*—There is an almost universal concensus of opinion, both among English administrators and the educated

native, that child marriage and enforced widowhood inflict a grievous wrong upon the women of India.

Second.—The appeal back to the sacred texts against these unrighteous customs has been made, and is successfully upheld.

Third.—While there is a general agreement that any large measure of legislation would at present be opposed to the sense of the Hindoo community, and would, therefore, be as inoperative as the Widow Re-marriage Act of 1856, there is also a well-founded opinion that in specified minor matters the time has come to grant partial legislative relief. Such relief would include a specific recognition of Hindoo marriages contracted by a high caste girl after her maturity: the non-forfeiture by a re-marrying widow of any property granted to her unconditionally by her husband's will, and the non-forfeiture of movable property inherited from her husband, in parts of India where the Hindoo law gives to her absolute control over such property.

Fourth.—That, while Government may aid the cause of reform by publishing the results of the inquiry which it has lately made throughout India, the reformers can much more powerfully help themselves by means of a central organization and local bodies.

Fifth.—That, apart from the forfeiture-of-property clause, the great obstacle in the way of reform is Hindoo public opinion. That the punitive enforcement of this opinion, by means of excommunication, can be fought in the courts, and may be still more surely overcome by patient and passive resistance.

In conclusion, it must be remembered that the opposition

is headed by a class of men who have a hereditary instinct of self-preservation. The Brahmin caste has, with the exception of the Budhist episode, always supplied the intellectual leaders of the Indian people. Already a section, the most active section, of that caste is in favour of reform. Their numbers are powerfully reinforced by the educated caste just below them in the technical Indian scale. The more conservative section of the Brahmins will give way, as soon as they feel that they have to choose between yielding to educated Hindoo opinion, or losing their influence over the Hindoo community. Their surrender will be no base striking of their colours, for they have only to turn to their sacred texts to find authority for the concessions required of them."

I agree with the remedies suggested by Dr. Hunter, only so far as they go. But the proposed changes in the law would not, I fear, much advance the cause of reform. Caste will continue to remain all powerful as ever, and will disdainfully snap its fingers at law, just as before. I am one of those who have little faith in the doctrine of "reform from within." Unaided by the active sympathy of Government, it can not do much. What has it done up to now? People blessed with a spirit of caste pride and caste exclusiveness, choose to shut their eyes to the evil, and console themselves with the delusion that our society is progressing "all along the line." Yes, it is progressing; but its progress can not be measured by months or years, but by centuries. The movement onward, if there has at all been any advance worth speaking, is much too slow to be perceptible.

Are we to be content with this sickening slowness, need-

lessly protracting, and in some cases accentuating and emphasizing the evil, when the Government can afford a grateful stimulus to reform by devising means for punishing malicious caste persecution? A reformer, though he may be stout of heart and really in earnest, is apt to stand aghast at the mightiness and the infinitude of the evil. He needs help which the Legislature can give without the least danger to the State, and with unmeasured welfare to its people. The twin abuses of infant marriage and enforced widowhood suck up the very sap of our national growth and vitality. It is, perhaps, to the interest of the priestly classes, who live by the pursuit of their calling, that the abuses should continue and flourish, and these have a powerful ally in caste.

Can the reformer turn to the educated classes for help? I am grieved to say, yet the truth must be told, that their moral fibre is capable of a great deal of strengthening, and as for their active faculties, they still lie perfectly dormant. They have, indeed, the intelligence to perceive social evils. But their moral indignation on the tyranny and barbarism of custom evaporates in words. The evils which they deplore, but dare not smite, are present in their homes; but they are sadly wanting in the spirit, the courage and the backbone, to do battle with wrong. A race of idle babblers these. They will speak brave words from the political platform about their country's wrongs and their countrymen's rights. But talk to them of something to be done, some little sacrifice to be made, they will slink away, each one making his own excuse for his backsliding. Education has produced an abundant crop of political patriots, but no social reformers. Of these latter, there have, indeed, been some; but how very few! The generality of our politicians have evidently taken

this for their motto—Slavery at home and liberty abroad. I know full well that education has done much good, and will do more. *Real* education will prove a mighty bulwark of the State. But it is idle to trust to the educated agency alone for the accomplishment of social reforms. Moral earnestness and courage, public spirit and sturdy independence, are as necessary for the reform of social abuses, as they are for political advancement. These virtues must be displayed and exercised in the social field as an earnest of a people's capacity for political progress.

There have been widow re-marriages in this province, both among Gujerati and Marathi Hindoos. But in almost all cases, the bridegrooms came from the uneducated mass. So it is not the educated who have led the way. There must be many young widows in their own homes, but these gentlemen shrink in abject terror from the trials they would have to undergo, if they were to do aught to alleviate the lot of their sisters or daughters. They go to England, and pay on their return the senseless penalties imposed by caste on enlightenment. Can we expect much from such sorry stuff? Can they be expected to carry divine light into the dense, dead, impenetrable, darkness that surrounds them? How can they, when they only speak, but act not?

Yet it must not he forgotten that there are great difficulties in the way. The abuses of centuries, sanctified by time, and supposed to be sanctified by religion, abuses which have woven themselves into the inner nature of Hindoos, the reform of these imposes no light task upon the reformer. The pains and penalties of excommunication are not such as may be lightly despised, and the social illusage, to which persons who have acted in defiance of custom and superstition

are often subjected with unrelenting and malignant persistency, may hold back even a brave soul from its purpose. So the fault does not entirely lie with the educated classes. It would be absurd to expect them all to be heroes, or to rail at them, because they are not all heroes. But many of them are such chicken-hearted valets!

The Shethias, or leaders, of their several castes can do even more than the educated classes in putting their followers on the track of reform. They have generally great influence with their caste-people, and they can exercise it as much for good as they now do for evil. As a class, the Shethias are, for the most part, uneducated, and they consider it essential to the maintenance of their position in their caste that the beliefs, born of darkness and ignorance, should be perpetuated in the people, and that Heaven's light should be shut out completely from them. Their motto would be, "Darkness, not Heaven's light, our guide." Themselves in darkness, they wish their caste to remain in darkness too, so that the Reign of Darkness might continue undisturbed. They are blind leaders of the blind, and have become headmen, not by virtue of any wisdom or bravery, but merely by virtue of their wealth.

The caste-people, imbued with the traditions of a blind, implicit, unquestioning obedience to their leaders, will only do as they are bid. If the leaders were themselves enlightened and earnest men, their educating influence upon their following would be invaluable. But the Shethias are exactly the reverse of what they seem. They play a double game. They are in reality the staunchest opponents of reform; they are the narrowest of bigots. Yet they are anxious to bear in

public the reputation of being the most liberal and the most enlightened members of their caste. To Government officials, and to their European, Parsi and other non-Hindu acquaintances, they represent that they themselves are painfully conscious of the social evils, that they themselves wish heartily for their reform, but that they are totally helpless. What could they do, while the caste was ignorant, stupid, perverse, wrong-headed? They carefully conceal from the public the fact that it is they themselves who set the caste in motion, whenever any person has dared to act in defiance of folly and unreason, and having done so, they say to the world, "Lo! We are helpless against such folly." The world generally believes them; and if they occasionally give a few thousand rupees towards some charity, their reputation for liberality, and large-mindedness is confirmed still more, and their fame is trumpeted forth by newspapers as men of munificence and enlightenment. They bolster up a reputation and a name for themselves, and being always nervously anxious for the good opinion of Government, they take precious good care that they are not found out. If any of them, who has married a second wife in the life-time of the first, is asked to attend a party with his family, he will take with him only the younger and the prettier of the two. Very few know that they have left another at home. Many of these men go through life in a mask. With them the reality is quite different from the outward seeming.

Sir Munguldas Nathoobhoy has established a Travelling Fellowship which is open to all Hindoos. Suppose one of his own caste-men obtained the fellowship and went to England for study, would not Sir Munguldas himself, at least, tacitly

acquiesce in his excommunication on his return? Cursondas Mooljee had been to Europe, and on his return from his travels, he was asked to dinner by Pranjeewandas Wagjee, a brother-in-law of Sir Munguldas, and Sir Munguldas was the first to stop all relations of eating with his own sister and her husband. What wonder then that all the rest of the caste should have followed at the time his august example? Pranjeewandas had to remain out of caste for three years, and was only taken back, after he had undergone the purifications of a *Prayaschit*, and had also paid a certain fine to the caste. His moustaches had to be shaven off, and a similar tonsorial operation had to be performed on the head of his sons, before the family was readmitted into the caste.

Then between active opposition on the one hand, and pitiful impotence on the other, shall we sit doing nothing, till the coming of the good time, when, it is supposed, the multitude will themselves feel the want of reform? There is no knowing, when such time may come. There are no signs yet of its coming. We may have to wait for many generations; perchance, for centuries. Is it right, is it proper, that the evils should last till then, when there is a way of considerably alleviating them within a reasonable space of time? I firmly believe that judicious Government intervention can do an incalculable amount of good. There must be an effectual provision against social persecution. The Act of 1856 must be strengthened and supported by punitive clauses which may have a deterrent effect upon Shethias. The existing Act being little more than a declaration of good wishes is a dead-letter, and not a living, beneficent law of the land. Government may also show their dislike of evil customs by subscribing to a Widow

Re-marriage Fund which may be started by reformers, and by their officers becoming members of Widow Re-marriage Associations. Their active countenance and support of the movement will restrain Shethias anxious for their good opinion, from actively opposing it.

Beneficent legislation on child-marriage or enforced widowhood will, no doubt, meet with opposition from diverse quarters. It will, indeed, raise a wild howl and clamour. But the chaotic cries will subside in course of time, and the people will gradually be educated up to the point of appreciating the value of the legislation. The measure for the abolition of Suttee was received with a storm of indignation. There were the same appeals, as now, to the sacredness and inviolabilty of custom ; and heaven and earth were called to bear witness that the most cherished convictions of the Hindoos, the most sacred commandments of their Shastras, were going to be ruthlessly trampled upon by an alien and unsympathetic Government. They called in the aid of English lawyers to procure the abolition of the cruel and unholy law which destroyed the liberty of the widow to ascend, *nolens volens,* the funeral pile of her husband and burn herself alive. Was not this a tyranical and arbitrary curtailment of the liberty of subjects, of the Divine right of man? Could not a man do what he liked with his own? Memorials containing these noble sentiments were sent to Government and to the British Parliament, but the Government remained firm and immoveable. The law came into operation, and, as we know, there was no rising against it. The degrading idea of Suttee was rooted out by the legislature from the minds of men. It was mercifully trampled under foot. The custom has perished, and with it all the reverence which was once attached to it.

Custom had reconciled my Hindoo brethren to the revolting horrors of Suttee. But now that the practice has perished, no Hindoo, unless, indeed, he is hopelessly wrong-headed, would wish for its revival. Not knowing their own good, the community was forced by law to know it.

Effective legislation upon the evils we now deplore will produce a similar revolution in the minds of those who at present cherish and reverence the enormities as a religious law. The very fact that the Government were so deeply impressed with the evils as to have considered it necessary to legislate upon them, is calculated to produce a wholesome moral effect upon the objects of the legislation. Shethias, anxious as ever to secure the good will of the Government, will be scared into submission to the new order of things. Reformers, on the other hand, will take heart. Protected by the strong arm of the law, they will not then have to exercise very rare virtue in acting up to their wishes and their convictions. Widow re-marriages will gradually be frequent and more frequent. Their novelty will slowly wear away, and the people will come atlast to regard it as an ordinary social event.

Quite a host of objections have been raised against Government intervention. People there are, even among the educated, who deny that the prohibition to remarry is an evil, affirming that it is rather a blessing in disguise. It tends, they say, to the spiritual exaltation of the widow. Deprived by Heaven's decree of her lord, she renounces the fleeting joys of the world, parts with all her interest in the world, and consecrates her life to works of piety and benevolence. She is a Sister of Charity and of Mercy in her house and in her street. She is by the bedside of the sick; she comforts the weary and the miserable. She has a blessing for all, a word of

advice for all. She is the centre from which radiates a divine light. Her nature is etherealized, spiritualized. She is now above the joys and interests of this world. She is not misreable. Her heart is full of heavenly bliss, and she looks forward with eagerness to the day, when her life of piety, devotion, and all unselfishness will come to an end, and she will be summoned by God to meet her mate in Heaven.

Such is the beautiful ideal conjured up to justify and glorify a hideous enormity! They would, indeed, spiritualize and refine the custom from the dross and grossness of sense and human reason! But can any one say that the ideal bears any kind of similitude to the real? Is not the ideal a cruel mockery of the real? There may be a widow here and there, one in 10,000, whose beatiful life approaches this ideal. But the great mass of them cannot be expected to attain to it. Even widows are human beings, and they must be judged as human beings. The barbarous and unnatural restraint imposed upon them can not make angels of them. There is nothing in it to exalt and uplift them ; there is much in it to debase and brutalize them. There are, undoubtedly, many good widows leading exemplary lives. But they are good and pious, not because of this custom, but in spite of it. I do not suggest, for a moment, that all young widows go wrong. But I do say that the prohibition is calculated to lead them to wrong, and not to their spiritual exaltation, as has been vainly supposed.

Spiritual exaltation! If the prohibition to re-marry leads to that happy result in the case of females, by a parity of reasoning, it should produce the same result in the case of males. But the male may marry ten or twenty times, if he

17345

likes. He may even espouse another wife in the life-time of the first. There is absolutely no bar to the gratification of his matrimonial desires. He may be sixty or seventy years old, having sons and daughters who may have nearly attained their half a century. Still there is nothing to prevent him bringing into the house a girl of ten, after going through the mockery of a marriage ceremony with her. He may be a mumbling fool, toothless, brainless and gouty, his numerous infirmities giving him notice in unmistakable language that he has to quit the world soon. But if he has money, he can buy his little darling from her parents, celebrate the marriage with all the pomp and circumstance of a Hindoo wedding, and march home with his unconscious victim. There may be a widow or two in his own house, a daughter, perhaps, or a grand-daughter. But these unhappy creatures must hide themselves away on this festive occasion into some dark corner, lest their ominous shadow should fall upon the happy pair and darken their lives. As if there were any doubt about the early darkening of the life of the poor little one!

Spiritual exaltation! According to this theory, the female attains it by an unnatural prohibition, and the male by unfettered license. Is it that this monstrous injustice has been perpetrated on our womankind, because the laws have been framed by men, and women had no voice in the making of them? Women are kept in absolute bondage, their lives, never held by their lords and masters to be worth much, have been darkened and debased by one-sided and oppressive laws, and the men add insult to a gross and palpable wrong when they say that the laws have been made for women by their betters for their own good, knew they but their own happiness. Selfish man!

The theory of spiritual elevation does not well fit in with the cruel shaving of the widow's hair. She is shorn of her beauty, her woman's crown. If man is made in the image of God, this is an ungodly desecration of that image,—this transformation of natural lovelines into unnatural hideousness. The vile custom must have had its origin in the fear that, so far from exalting or spiritualizing a widow, the artificial restraints imposed upon her were more calculated to bring about her moral degradation. Hence this barbarous precaution against it.

Others there are who admit the evil with varying degrees of candour, but they are jealous of Government intervention in any shape. From English books they have imbibed notions of the liberty of subjects and the inalienable rights of man. They seem to say :—"Can we not do what we like with our own? Our house is our castle, and what right has the Government to interfere in our household affairs? We must be left free to regulate the affairs of our own home, as we please. If we don't mend them, granting that they do need mending, well, that is so much the worse for ourselves. But whether we mend them or not, it is entirely our own bussiness and nobody else's."

Such is their pleading for the sanctity of home and the sacred principles of liberty, as they understand them. They claim their right to perpetuate a wrong. They choose to stand by and look on. They do nothing themselves. With their present spirit, they can do nothing themselves. They deplore the great obstacles in the way ; and yet they scorn to receive outside help. They prefer to immolate themselves on the altar of Liberty. They cry for liberty at any price,—

let the price be social slavery and degradation, if necessary. They demand liberty, that they may continue in misery.

A wise law educated the people out of the horrible notion of Suttee, and a wise law can educate the people out of other notions too, no less horrible, which are as an incubus on the rise and progress of our community. And, be it remembered, there was no education among our people in those days. Now, education has made great strides, and the people are more prepared to receive a beneficent law harmonizing with justice and humanity, than they were fifty or even twenty-five years ago.

When they talk of the unwillingness of the people, in regard to legislation, it occurs to none to ask whether the widows, the parties most concerned in the matter, are unwilling. But nobody would care to listen to their voice, even if they were to essay to speak. They are only women, nay, widows! But is the mass of the people really so unwilling as actively to resent Government intervention? The mighty mass, dense, impenetrable, steeped in darkness, made no sign of discontent, while Mr. Malabari, all honour to him, was most actively carrying on his compaign against child-marriage and enforced widowhood. They are innocent of exaggerated notions of liberty. They are brought up in the traditions of the almightiness of government to enact what laws they please, and if a law, such as I advocate, were passed, they would give vent to a murmur of disapproval, but they would never dream of opposing it. The *Sircar* is their *mabap* (parents), who can make what laws they choose for their children, even though the laws might not be quite after their taste. And is it too much to expect that the innate sense of right

which is to be found in all men, will assist in enlisting the popular sympathy on the side of a good and just law?

The strenuous efforts of Mr. Malabari have made no impression whatever on the masses, who can be impressed by Legislature alone. But Malabari, though a Parsi, has rallied round his standard many earnest Hindoos. His movement, as proceeding from a non-Hindoo, is looked upon perhaps, by a not inconsiderable section of the English knowing Hindoos with sullen indifference. But the significant fact must be noted that his crusade did not result in active hostile demonstrations throughout the country. The only such demonstration of any note, to my knowledge, was got up, I am sorry to say, in Bombay alone, whose boast it is that it is the most enlightened city in India. It was held in Madhow Baugh, the stronghold of Hindoo orthodoxy, and was presided over by the late Rao Saheb Vishvanath Narayen Mundlik a pious Brahmin, distinguished as a public citizen, but intensely conservative in social matters. The meeting took place in September 1886, when Mr. Malabari was vigorously prosecuting his agitation. It was a monster meeting, but a vast majority consisted of the ignorant and the unthinking. A report published in the *Bombay Gazette* says of the constitution of the meeting that "there were Brahmins among them, as well as non-Brahmins, the latter being mostly represented by Bhattias and Banyas, whose number largely preponderated over members of the superior caste." The writer delicately hits off the composition of the meeting, when he says, "it is not possible to give anything like a complete list of those present at the meeting, as Bhattias and Banyas, who presented a solid phalanx on the

occasion, generally devote themselves to their private occupation of amassing money, and do not care to be distinguished as public citizens." There was any amount of noise and confusion at the meeting, but there was no deliberation of the weighty question which had called them together. They had come there to do, as they were bid, and they did it in down-right earnest, without even so much as a pretence of discussion or debate. A memorial, to be sent to Lord Dufferin, then Viceroy of India, was read stating that the Hindoo community "viewed with alarm and anxiety the persistent and systematic efforts which have been made of late to misrepresent to your Excellency's Government and to the public at large the feelings of the Hindoo community on the question of their marriage customs," and that the agitation for social reform had been "supported only by a small body of enthusiasts, who, in order to carry out their own ideas of social progress, are prepared to go the dangerous length of invoking legislative interference with institutions, such as that of marriage, which the great bulk of Hindoos still cherish as of social and religious importance."

The memorialists would not even admit the evil, so, of course, they had no remedy to propose. So loath were they to admit it, that they would not accept a temperately worded addition proposed by the Mr. K. T. Telang, now a judge of the Bombay High Court. It was as follows :—

"Your memorialists are aware that the practice of early marriages, as it now prevails in the Hindoo community, entails certain evils of a grave character, although these evils are by no means so grave as they have been represented to be in recent controversies, and although they do not lie exactly in the quarters generally indicated. But your

memorialists are of opinion that such evils can be remedied, and are best remedied, by the action of the community itself. And being of that opinion, your memorialists are also apprehensive of the intervention of Government in this matter which may have the effect, rather of retarding, than of accelarating improvement."

There was nothing, in the least, objectionable in this addition. With his usual tact and discretion, Mr. Telang had just hinted at the evil in somewhat vague terms; so as not to offend the susceptibilities of the meeting, and had moreover balanced the admission of the evil with an emphatic endorsement of the policy of non-intervention urged in the memorial. But the meeting did not see either the justice or the policy of making that admission in the memorial. The mass, taking the hint from their reactionary leaders, made a noisy protest against it, and on counting the votes, only 47 men, out of some thousands, were declared to be in its favour! How much of false pride was there in rejecting scornfully an amendment of this nature!

Government have, for the present, declared their unwillingness to interfere. But there is something hopeful in the fact that they have not distinctly laid down the principle of non-intervention. They have rather expressed a readiness to resort to legislation, if the general sense of the community be in its favour. They seem for the present to be afraid of wounding the susceptibilities of caste. Now what is the Hindoo caste system? It is sometimes falsely represented to Englishmen that a caste is something like a club. It is not a club. There is a vast difference between club and caste. A person, who is otherwise eligible for membership in a club, may join or leave it when he likes. He can transfer himself

from one club to another. It is an entirely voluntary undertaking on his part. When he has joined a club, he is supposed to approve of its rules and its constitution. But the constitution of caste is on entirely different lines. A person is a born member of his caste, and by virtue of his being born in the caste, he enjoys all its rights, privileges, and disabilities. Being born in the caste, he has to abide by the unwritten rules of the caste, the whim of Shethias being the law. The rights and priveleges of caste are the birth-right of every one of its members, and I doubt the justice of depriving a man of his birth-right at the will of Shethias, which is determined or regulated by no law or rule. It is scarcely fair that the Shethias should have the power to inflict upon persons obnoxious to them the terrible penalties of excommunication. It is true that the sentence is pronounced by the caste in meeting assembled. But the leaders are the prime movers, and their followers being generally very ignorant, very timid, and very docile, it has never been a difficult task to lead them. A man who is born in one caste can not gain admittance into any other caste. The Shudra would shut the doors of his caste against a Brahmin of the highest caste. I am a high caste Banya, but I can not be taken by Bhattias or Looanas into their castes, lower as they are considered to be in the social scale. For this reason, a man who is put out of his caste is virtually out of the whole Hindoo community. His progeny is condemned along with himself. His children nobody would take or receive in marriage. None of his caste fellows would come to him, in the event of a death in the family. The pains and penalties of excommunication are terrible to face, especially when one has to encounter ignorance and malice on the one hand, and craven fear on the

other. The immense power of punishment, vested virtually in the caste Shethias, is more often exercised for evil than for good, for the perpetuation of an abuse than the remedy of a wrong. Is it meet, is it just, that they should be allowed a free and unfettered exercise of this power ; that Government should refuse to do anything that might have a deterrent effect upon the unscrupulous holders of such power ?

Act XI. of 1856 affords no relief to widows. It removes legal obstacles to the re-marriage of widows, but it leaves by far the greatest obstacle of all untouched. The Act, therefore, for any real good it may do, is perfectly useless. But I believe it to be a most important measure in this respect—that it involves an admission of the principle of Government intervention in social matters. The law declared that the offspring of a widow by a second marriage should not be held illegitimate and incapable of inheriting property, distinctly observing in the preamble that *although the legal incapacity was in accordance with established custom, it was not in accordance with a true interpretation of the precepts of the Hindoo religion, and that, therefore, the civil law should no longer prevent those Hindoos, who might be so minded, from adopting a different custom, in accordance with the dictates of their own consciences.* It was added that *the removal of all legal obstacles to the marriage of Hindoo widows would tend to the promotion of good morals and to the public welfare.*

So in this case the law was framed in direct opposition to custom, and it was fondly hoped that it would tend to the promotion of morals and to the public welfare. Has that hope been realized ? There is but one answer to this question. Make a law for the effectual protection of the widow and her mate from social illusage, and then alone will there be

people ready to follow the dictates of their own conscience, in contravention of established custom, and then alone will there be a promotion of good morals and the public welfare. The law has only to go a step or two further in the direction of the principle which already underlies the Act of 1856.

But many of our reformers, who affect to be deeply moved by the evils, cry out against Government intervention. They sit still doing nothing. They declare they are powerless against the enormity of the abuse, and yet they would not receive the aid that would give them heart and strength to cope with it. They patiently await the wonders that would be effected by the time spirit. They are sure that the national conscience will awake some day, and they choose to stand by and look on, till the happy time comes. Then they talk of going along the line of least resistance, and of the time being not ripe for any strong measure of reform. Under cover of idle phrases like these they excuse their own apathy and inactivity. These are the counsels of timidity and selfishness.

The ignorant mass is not educated enough to take shelter under such frivolous excuses. I have travelled over many parts of Gujerat and Kattyawar, and have conversed with a large number of strictly orthodox people on the subject of widow remarriage. They abhor from their heart the crimes which are the direct results of the senseless prohibition to remarry. They would regard with favour any proposal allowing such remarriage, of course, between persons belonging to the same caste, and they would be glad, if the deterrent of excommunication were authoritatively removed, with respect to widow remarriage. In a village of Kattyawar are living two or three widows who have remarried.

There is no head or Shethia of the caste living in the village. The population of the place is, more or less, on the same social level, and they live in peace with the couples. The people only say to themselves that so long as a Banya widow marries a Banya and a Brahamin widow a Brahamin of her own caste, there can be no objection to such an alliance. They consider that the couples living in their village have done no wrong, and that lawful marriage was infinitely better than an immoral life. The simple folk do not harm the couples; nay they do not even consider themselves defiled by eating with them on occasions. So the oppressors of such couples are not generally the poor, ignorant, simple folk, but the headmen of the castes, and the law ought to be made to reach them.

"I have little faith in Social Reform Associations. They come into being with a flourish of trumpets, and are expected to effect all sorts of good. Their constitution is determined upon, rules are framed, pledges are signed, and penalties are fixed for defaulters. And what happens? One by one the pledgers slink away, under one pretext or another, and eventually the organization dissolves into darkness. They had one such association in Ahmedabad, and another in Poona. But they went the way of all similar organizations. Whatever the checks and penalties you may introduce in a voluntary organization, they are of no avail, if the members are wanting in the spirit of earnest, genuine, reform.

If the iniquities of caste were to meet with opposition by persons willing to make self-sacrifice, and inspired by such intense moral earnestness as may make an impression on others, then caste will begin to yield. It will grow weaker and weaker with the growing strength of the opposition. It

will recede, as reason, and justice, and right, will advance. Nay defeated and discredited, it will itself be gradually inoculated with the spirit of the times. But there is no opposition yet given to it, that is worth speaking of. It is still master of the field. It is invincible, because no real effort has been made to conquer it. Its back is not so much as even scratched; and it is hopeless to expect the average reformer to break its backbone.

I wish it to be distinctly understood that I do not suggest aught against Hindoo widows, as a class, which I would not suggest against any group of women, similarly circumstanced, to whatever community they belonged. There may be hundreds and thousands of chaste young widows in my community. But neither my main argument, nor the purpose of this little publication, rests upon the question whether a majority of them lead a moral life or not. I do not say that by every one of them marriage is regarded as the supreme bliss, or that the nature of overyone of them is gross and sensual. I take my stand upon this ground alone—that the prohibition to remarry is unnatural, and that the custom being discordant with nature, nature knows how to revenge itself upon its transgressors. I say that there is an abuse in our midst, and it is no vindication of the evil to say that it does not do all the harm it is imagined by some that it does. Granted that it does the least possible harm; granted that a large majority of the widows of marriageable age would not remarry, if they were left free in the matter. But that is no reason for allowing the abuse to remain. I say let them be free to marry or not to marry. That is the only rational, the only right, mode of dealing with the question. Let the artificial bonds devised by selfish men be broken, and good, not evil,

will come of the freedom ; for the freedom will be accordant with justice and reason.

Bad laws and bad institutions have a most pernicious effect upon the people subject to them. However hideous and repulsive a custom may be, the nature of man gets used to it ; familiarity divests it of its horror and repulsiveness, and time invests it with sanctity and reverence. Such is the sanctity and reverence given to the custom which places heavy shackles on the widows. The sentiment will lose half its force, if the Legislature were to pronounce that it is not one to be fondly or piously cherished. See how the custom being left unchecked by any power strong enough to cope with it, has grown to become a fashion among castes which originally had no restriction whatever upon the remarriage of widows ! The prohibition originated with the Brahmins. Then the Banyas and other castes, aspiring to be as near Brahmins as possible in the social scale, adopted the fashion. Widow remarriage came to be considered as a badge of social inferiority. False pride and a vain love of imitation made others impose upon themselves the evil custom, in order that they may conform to the Brahminical standard. They knew it was bad ; they knew it was unjust ; but they could not bear the idea of doing what had been forbidden among the highest caste. અરગે તે અરગે કાંઈ બ્રાહ્મણ વાણીઆં તે મરગે ? So replied the good old woman to the inquiry whether widow remarriage would not be a good thing. She could not deny that it was a good thing in itself ; said it might be a good thing for the inferior castes, but not for Brahmins and Banyas. Such slaves to fashion we all are !

I have said nothing about the custom of child marriage, though it is inseparably associated with enforced widow-hood,

because I wished to confine myself to the main purpose of this publication. When I ask for legislative interference in the one case, I also ask for it in the other. It is not my business here to indicate the lines which might be followed by the Legislature in regard to child-marriage. The remedial measures suggested by Mr. Malabari deserve careful consideration. However much Hindoos may differ from Mr. Malabari, they must, in fairness, acknowledge the trouble he has taken in quickening the minds of the people and of the Government to the question of social reform. He has set the minds of men thinking about abuses which strike at the root of our national growth. He has succeeded in interesting Government in the question, though he has not succeeded in bringing Government to legislate upon it. Legislative interference is not abhorrent to the general sense of the people. The seed has been sown, and I hope it has not fallen on entirely barren soil.

I have done. The reason why I have got my views and experiences published in this form has already been told. Since writing the above, I have noticed with satisfaction that the principle of wise legislative interference for the removal of social abuses is gradually commending itself to some of those Hindoo gentlemen whose opinion carries great weight. I earnestly hope and pray that true friends of reform may gird up their lions and do what they can to battle with the huge evils we all deplore, and ask Government to assist them in their sacred mission. Let there be an organized band of workers, honest, earnest and true; we have had enough of talkers. It has been well said that man is a missionary in this world; and what mission could be nobler and better than that of rescuing thousands of our women from vile bondage, and leading them forth, slowly but surely, from darkness into light!

APPENDIX.

I GIVE below the purport of some letters which appeard in the *Rast Goftar* newspaper, on the agitation created by Vurjeewandas & Co. in the Kapole community, because I and my son-in-law had been invited by two Kapole gentlemen to be present at the weddings celebrated by them.

A correspondent signing himself "A Gogari Kapole Thakore," writes in the *Rast Goftar* of the 23rd June 1889, as under :—

"Sheth Vurjeewandas Madhowdas and his son Tribhowandas have made a mountain of a molehill. They have created an unnecessary stir in the community and have stopped caste feasts. And all for what? It is eighteen years since Sheth Madhowdas Rugnathdas was the first among Kapole Banyas to marry a widow, who is a niece of Sheth Vurjeewandas, and that re-marriage, contracted so many years since, is the cause of the present agitation. Widow re-marriage is not allowed in our community, and so Mr. Madhowdas was put out of caste. The instrument, by virtue of which he was excommunicated, simply stated that no member of our caste should eat or drink with him, or give or receive in marriage a son or daughter. There was no other condition in this agreement. I may say the agreement has been kept in the dark up to now, and, therefore, many of my caste-people do not yet exactly know the terms of the covenant.

The cause of the recent dispute in our caste is this. In the month of Fagan last, Pranjeewandas Wagjee celebrated the marriage of his son, and Mr. Madhowdas had been invited, along with many Parsis, Europeans and Musulmans, to the marriage procession only. Sheth Vurjeewandas and his son could not tolerate this, and while Holi was near at hand, they stopped all caste festivities. Efforts were made to frighten Mr. Pranjeewandas, and it was resolved that the caste feasts should only be allowed, if Pranjeewands offered an apology expressing his regret at what he had done. The son and father dared not call a public meeting of the caste, in

order to punish Mr. Pranjeewandas. Therefore, they combined privately with some of their caste-men and made endeavours to put indirect pressure upon Pranjeewandas by stopping all caste feasts.

I entreat my Kapole brethren not to become the tools of these Shethias. If, for the sake of a family feud, they were to stop the caste feasts, they should be deprived of their leadership, and it should be given to some fit man. The Kapoles may give it to Sir Munguldas, if they like, so that the squabble might come to an end.

I must admit that Mr. Madhowdas went against the custom of the caste by marrying a widow. But he has done nothing wrong, as some of his caste-men have done, who are nevertheless allowed to remain in the caste. A Kapole Banya is living with a Kapole widow after having married her in private. Another Kapole is living, as man and wife, with a low caste Shudra woman. A brother-in-law of a Kapole Sheth is living with a Marathi woman. All these persons are, however, allowed to remain in the caste. The greatest and only offence of Mr. Madhowdas was simply this, that he married a neice of Sheth Vurjeewandas. I have strong reasons for saying that if he had married, not a relative of Sheth Vurjeewandas, but some other Kapole widow, the agitation which we now witness would never have been raised. Pragjee Laljee, a Kapole, had married Shamkore, a widow of his caste; and in the same way Vanmali Ladha Modi had married a Dakshani Brahmin widow. Now, I beg to ask if any Kapole will be able to tell me in what year and on what date, the caste had excommunicated these persons. I make bold to say, they were never excommunicated. All this storm has been raised against Mr. Madhowdas alone, because he married a niece of Sheth Vurjeewandas.

Another correspondent, whose letter was published in the *Rast Goftar* of the 17th July last, says:—The account of the tempest raised by Sheth Vurjeewandas and his son which appeared in your issue of the 23rd ultimo from the pen of a correspondent, was very incomplete. The writer has only referred to the case of Mr. Madhowdas Rugnathdas; but another cause of the absurd feud is yet to be told. Mr. Runchordas Purmanandas, the son-in-law of Mr. Madhowdas, lately attended a *nautch* party given by Mr. Harchand Premjee. Vurjeewandas & Co. say that Mr. Harchand committed a great offence by inviting Mr. Ruchordas to the party, just as they say Mr. Pranjeewandas was guilty of having invited Mr. Madhowdas to the marriage procession. It is therefore, ruled

that both Harchand and Pranjeewandas should apologize for their offence.

I give credit for raising this ludicrous question to Sheth Vurjeewandas, his son, Tribhowandas, and Sheth Rugnathdas Gopaldas. The above "offence" was committed in the month of Maha, and as none of their caste-people imagined that either Harchand or Pranjeewandas had done any wrong, they had kept up with them the usual caste relations of eating together without any restraint. When the Holi festival came near, one or two Kapoles wanted to give a caste dinner. They went, as usual, for permission to Sheth Vurjeewandas, when he told them that as long as satisfaction was not given by the two gentlemen above-named for the "muddle" which they had created, he would not grant permission for any caste-dinners. He had sat quiet for a month, and made no difficulty about the matter till the advent of Holi, when our caste-people hold dinners, which are attended by the whole caste. For four days, some of our people went to Mr. Vurjeewandas asking permission to hold the dinners, and they invariably met with a refusal. Mr. Vurjeewandas always had the same answer to the applicants that some decision should first be come to with regard to the "muddle." Having raised this difficulty, he called at his house 50 or 100 of his caste-men and held discussions at night which were protracted, till 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. Some of the Kapoles present at these deliberations inquired how the matter could be disposed of, whereupon the Shethias answered that the difference would come to no end until the two gentlemen had apologized. So much for the wisdom of the Shethias!

There are about 2,000 members of the Kapole caste in Bombay, and is there not a single sensible or independent man among them? How can caste be defiled by the presence of Mr. Madhowdas at a gathering which included Englishmen, Parsis and Musulmans? Surely, Mr. Madhowdas was not asked to dine with his caste-fellows. As a matter of fact, the Shethias have raised this tempest, in order to secure their private grudge, and if there is no one in my caste to exercise his independent judgment then I can only deplore the lamentable state of things. I have been noticing for a long time past that the Shethias are in the habit of importing their private feuds into caste questions, and the present is one more instance of the same."

"A Kapole Banya Lover of Truth," in a communication to the same

paper, expresses his indignation at the conduct of the Shethias and appeals to his caste-fellows to protest against it in these terms:—"You must send your protest to the Shethias, saying that no offence whatever has been committed by anyone in this matter; and if they do not accept it, then, verily, you are not their bondsmen that you should act as they bid you to. Ten, twenty, or a hundred or two of Kapoles ought to prove by their courage and independence that the time of the tyranny and arbitray will of Shethias has gone by, and that we are on the side of right and they are on the side of wrong. Heaven befriends the just. Therefore, step forward and come to the aid of innocent men like Mr. Harchand and Mr. Pranjeewandas. Your true courage will lie in rescuing them from the oppression of the Shethias, and God is sure to assist you."

Another Kapole, writing in the same strain, says:—"Our Shethias seem to say, 'Do as we say, and not as we do.' They say that Messrs. Pranjeewandas and Harchand have committed an offence, and that, therefore, unless they apologized, no Kapole should go to dine at their house. How is it then that Mr. Harkisondas Narotamdas asks Mr. Pranjeewands's son and his wife to dine at his house? Is it because the lady is Mr. Harkisondas's daughter and Mr. Pranjeewandas's son is her husband? How very strange it is that Mr. Harkisondas can suffer no pollution by eating with them, whereas it is open to no member of the caste to do the same!

The wife of another son of Mr. Pranjeewandas is the daughter of Mr. Jamnadas Ramjee Vora. The Voras say Mr. Harchand and Mr. Pranjeewandas have committed an offence. But they are nevertheless at perfect liberty to dine with the young lady, because they are the servile followers of the Shethias.

If P. and H. have committed an offence by inviting Mr. Madhowdas and his son-in-law to a marriage party, Mr. Muljee Bhowanidas Barbhaya and his wife, who had been to a party at Mr. Madhowdas's house, were equally guilty. How is it, then, that no one took any cognizance of their "offence"? The reason was that Mr. Muljee's wife is the daughter of one of the big Shethias of the caste, and also Mr. Muljee and his wife are nearly related to Mr. Vurjeewandas. Such is the justice of these Shethias."

S. K. KHAMBATA & Co., Bombay Printing Works, Apollo Street, Fort.

00017345

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 05 October, 2018